



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

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VETERA NOVIS AUGERE NATIONALISM, NEO- THOMISM AND HISTORIOGRAPHY IN QUEBEC AND FLANDERS 1900-1945

PhD Canadian Studies
University of Edinburgh
2017

Kasper Swerts

Signed Declaration

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

Parts of this work have been published in *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies* as “A Flemish Nozdormu? Teleology and Philosophy of History in the Writings of Hendrik Jozef Elias”.

Kas Swerts

June 10, 2018

‘You know, a dissertation is largely comprised of other dissertations,’ Kolibril explained.
‘A new dissertation is always some sort of orgy from preceding dissertations which, uhm...,
fecundate each other to bring forward something new, that did not exist before.’

Professor Kolibril, *Rumo & de Wonderen in het donker*, pp.156.

Abstract

This thesis compares and contrasts the historiography of Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century. The main argument is that the philosophy of neo-Thomism was influential to the conceptualization and writing of history by prominent nationalist historians in both Quebec and Flanders during the period leading up to the Second World War. By extensively comparing the life and works of prominent nationalist historians that played an active role in the nationalist movements of Quebec and Flanders, it has been found that the Catholic University of Leuven was influential in the development of nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders during the first decades of the twentieth century. In this sense, this thesis argues that the nationalist historians of Quebec and Flanders be considered as part of a shared historiographical tradition that was influenced by the neo-Thomist philosophy which played an essential role at the Catholic University of Leuven during this period, and which can be traced back in the writings and practices of nationalist historians in both Quebec and Flanders.

Out of this shared influence of the neo-Thomist philosophy then, this thesis argues for a re-evaluation of the traditional portrayal of nationalist historiography in the first half of the twentieth century, and a reconsideration of the influence neo-Thomism has had on the conceptualization of nationalist history in Quebec and Flanders. It is argued that the nationalist historians of both Quebec and Flanders have traditionally been characterized as unscientific due to their convergence of science and politics, and portrayed the nation as deterministic, meaning that the nation's essence and development was unaffected by the historical circumstances. By analysing the historical works of nationalist historians that either attended the Catholic University of Leuven, or were part of a network that was influenced by the writings of the neo-Thomists that taught at Leuven, this thesis will make three general arguments that will nuance this traditional portrayal of nationalist historiography during the first half of the twentieth century.

First, it will be argued that the neo-Thomist emphasis on the interdependence of essential and existential characteristics nuances the essentialist portrayal of the nation. Using the case of neo-Thomist chemistry as a counterexample, it will be shown how nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders ascribed an important role to the existentiality and historicity of the nation, and as such, compels us to reconsider the essentialist paradigm of nationalist historiography. Secondly, the neo-Thomist notion of science which legitimated the convergence of subjectivity and objectivity sheds new light on the practice and theory of what constituted scientific history in the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, it will be argued that Quebec and Flanders shared a similar theoretical concept of what constituted scientific history, but represented their historical works differently due to the differentiating political and academic context. Finally, the thesis will highlight how the notions of ambiguity and human freedom, which figured prominently in neo-Thomism, influenced the notion of teleology in Quebec and Flemish nationalist historiography, as is illustrated by the notion of coincidence in Flemish, and providence in Quebec historiography. In addition, using the cases of nationalist historians Lionel Groulx and Hendrik Elias, it will be argued that the different political contexts influenced the political actions of the two nationalist historians, which helps to shed new light on the motives of Flemish nationalist historians to collaborate during the Second World War.

By comparing and contrasting the two cases then, this thesis is able to show how the neo-Thomist framework and crucial concepts were not only instrumental to the nationalist historiographies in Quebec and Flanders, but were also malleable to differing historical contexts, and, as such, provides new insight in the intricate relationship between religion, nationalism and historiography that underpinned nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century.

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Acknowledgements

The pre-Socratic word denoting truth – ἀλήθεια – is a *negative* concept. It translates as “the state of *no longer being hidden*.” There is true academic comfort in this reading of the term: it implies that if the scholarly journey we have embarked upon when unfolding a thesis is up to par, the truths we lay bare *were always there*, waiting to be discovered.

The ultimate truth I have discovered is that a thesis is not a solitary endeavour, but constitutes a debate to which a plethora of people and opinions have contributed, and whom deserve their own recognition. First of all, I want to thank my primary supervisor, Dr. James Kennedy. His guidance, critical reading and overall support have proven to be essential in the completion of my thesis. The numerous conversations we have had – on two continents – have helped me to frame my research, critically engage with the comparison and concepts used, and have kept me motivated to complete the thesis. Moreover, his perspective as a historical sociologist has proven crucial in my endeavour to engage with historiography and historiographical analysis from an interdisciplinary viewpoint, and try to explore novel ways to engage with the subject. Secondly, I want to thank my secondary supervisor, Prof. Dr. Ewen Cameron. His expertise as a historian helped me to critically engage with the primary sources, always question the validity of my arguments and statements, and understand the complexity of the historiographical subject. Moreover, his expertise in Scottish history has helped me to compare the two cases with an external context, and has invoked a fascination and interest in Scottish history and historiography.

In addition to my two supervisors, there are a number of people and institutions I want to personally thank for commenting on the subject. First, Dr. Michel Garneau who from the onset showed a critical interest into the subject, and whose critical remarks proved crucial to develop the framework for comparing the two cases. Dr. Jean-Philippe Warren, for his critical remarks and comments on the nature of neo-Thomist philosophy in Quebec. Luc Boeva for his comments on my concept of nationalism, and general characterization of the Flemish Movement and Flemish nationalism. The Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe for helping me during my research into the life and historical career of the historian Joseph-Ernest Laferrière, and for providing me with crucial archival records that have proven instrumental to this thesis. And finally, The Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, and Archief, Documentatie en Onderzoekscentrum voor het Vlaams-nationalisme for giving me advice on my research, and providing me with a locus to conduct research while visiting Quebec and Flanders during my research trips.

In addition, I want to thank all the friends and family that have commented, proofread and criticized my thesis. In particular, I want to thank my two brothers – Lex and Iason – and Elke Close for critically listening to my expositions, and for not being afraid to be critical with regards to my subject, the methodology and the writing.

Finally, I want to dedicate this thesis to my father, who is currently enjoying a prolonged stay at the Elysian Fields. His passion for archaeology and history have instilled me with a similar drive, interest and enthusiasm, and have made me into the person I am today. May this thesis be the first of many more endeavours, so that when we meet again in the Elysium, I can proudly look him in the eyes.

Kas

Introduction

The world has heard much *about* Louvain.

In these pages is a message *from* Louvain, a little of the truth that is indestructible.

For the time a great seat of learning lies desolate. For the time: its voice will be heard again:

rescissa vegetius resurget. [something that was destroyed will return more invigorated]

Peter Coffey, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. ix.

On the night of August 25, 1914, the city of Leuven was in flames. The German occupier was convinced that the residents of the city had killed a number of German soldiers. “And now, of course,” General the Baron Arthur von Lüttwitz explained to the American ambassador, “we have to destroy the city,” exalting that “not one stone will be left on another.”¹ And no stone would. For three days, death and destruction would devour the city.² Monseigneur de Becker, rector of the American College at the University of Leuven, recounted the horrors he witnessed to the American ambassador, surprisingly, in a calmly fashion.³ Yet when the rector related the destruction of the *Halles* of the University, he wept, murmuring the words “the library.”⁴ The library, comprising of a collection that dated back to the foundation of the University in the 15th century, had been razed along with the *Halles*. Its destruction would send a jolt of horror around the world.⁵ The “great seat of learning”, of which the world had heard much during these years, now laid desolate, becoming an early indication of the destruction the European continent would endure during these years. The seat would ultimately be restored. Under the direction of the Belgian Archbishop Désiré-Joseph Mercier and through the support of American funds, a new library would ultimately be built, thus confirming the Irish Catholic Peter Coffey’s prophetic words that Leuven’s voice would be heard again.

The question however is: why was Leuven characterised as a great seat of learning? The Catholic University of Leuven, prior to its destruction, had acquired an international reputation. Next

¹ Brand Whitlock, *Belgium: A Personal Narrative*. Vol. 1 (New York: Appleton and Company, 1919), pp. 152-153.

² Sophie De Schaepdrijver, *De Groote Oorlog: Het Koninkrijk België Tijdens De Eerste Wereldoorlog* (Antwerp: Houtekiet, 2013), pp. 88-90

³ Brand Whitlock, *Belgium: A Personal Narrative*, pp. 160.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The destruction, combined with a heightened food shortage and condemnation of the German occupier contributed to the foundation of the Commission for Belgium Relief, spearheaded by the future American president Herbert Hoover. For more on the Commission, see Johan Den Hertog, 'The Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Political Diplomatic History of the First World War', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 21 (2010), pp. 596-598; Kenneth Bertrams, 'The Domestic Uses of Belgian–American ‘Mutual Understanding’: The Commission for Relief in Belgium Educational Foundation, 1920–1940', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 13 (2015), pp. 327-330.

to its library, the University had a profoundly international scope for a university at the beginning of the twentieth century. In addition to Monseigneur de Becker's American College, there were a number of Seminaries and Colleges that attracted students from across the globe.⁶ The most important reason however why Leuven was considered a great seat of learning was because of the crucial role it played in the resurgence of Thomistic philosophy during the nineteenth century. Neo-Thomism or Neo-Scholasticism is a term that indicates an amalgam of scholars that sought to connect modern philosophy and science to the teachings and dogmas of the medieval philosopher, Thomas Aquinas.⁷ In Leuven, this revival of Thomist philosophy was given an enormous impetus with the foundation of the *Institut Supérieur de Philosophie* by the aforementioned Désiré Mercier and the publication of the journal *Revue néo-scholastique*.⁸ In addition to the foundation of the *Institut*, the creation of a number of Seminaries, particularly the *Leo XIII Seminary* to accommodate international students firmly established the Catholic University of Leuven as a centre for neo-Thomist philosophy at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century.

In this thesis, I will explore the role and influence of the Catholic University of Leuven and neo-Thomist philosophy on the nationalist historiography in Flanders and Quebec. The choice for Flanders seems straightforward. The Catholic University of Leuven was situated in Flanders, and a number of Flemish nationalist historians would enrol at the university during the interwar period, most notably Hendrik Jozef Elias. Elias, born in 1898, would play a crucial role in the Flemish nationalist movement during the first half of the twentieth century. Studying history at the Catholic University in Leuven, Elias was recognized as a talented historian – he graduated with the highest honours – and pursued a historical career before ultimately commencing a political career in the *Vlaamsch Nationaal Verbond* [Flemish National Union] and collaborating with the German occupier during the Second World War, for which he was imprisoned afterwards.⁹ The choice for Quebec however seems at first glance unconventional. Separated by the Atlantic Ocean and traditionally analysed in either an imperial or Francophone context, the comparison between Quebec and Flemish nationalist historiography in the first half of the twentieth century has, up till now, been neglected. Moreover, the possible influence

⁶ Including the Irish College where Peter Coffey had resided during his time in Leuven. For more on Coffey, see Hugh Bredin, 'Coffey, Peter', in *Biographical Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Philosophers*, ed. by Stuart Brown, Diane Collinson and Robert Wilkinson (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 150.

⁷ Thomas Fliethmann, 'Neo-Thomism', in *Religion Past and Present* (Brill, 2011); Mark Jordan, 'Neo-Thomism', in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. by Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁸ For more on the foundation of the Institut, see Luc Courtois, and Miloš Jačov, *Les Débuts De L'institut Supérieur De Philosophie (Louvain): À Travers La Correspondance De Désiré Mercier Avec Le Saint-Siège (1887 - 1904)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); Louis De Raeymaeker, 'La Fondation De L'institut Supérieur De Philosophie À L'université De Louvain', *Milano: Rivista di filosofia neo-scholastica*, 43 (1951), pp. 439-446.

⁹ For an extensive biography on Elias, see Pieter-Jan Verstraete, *Hendrik Jozef Elias: Biografie* (Kortrijk: 2005).

of Leuven and the neo-Thomist philosophy on Quebec nationalist historiography has been largely ignored in the analysis of one of the most prominent French-Canadian nationalist historians of the first half of the twentieth century, Lionel Groulx.¹⁰ While Groulx did not enrol at the Catholic University of Leuven himself – he contemplated the move but ultimately chose for Fribourg – a number of his acquaintances did attend classes at Leuven, and he himself had the seminal works of the Leuven neo-Thomists in his private library.¹¹

In this sense, a connection can be made between some of the most prominent nationalist historians of the first half of the twentieth century, with the neo-Thomist philosophy the overarching framework through which it becomes possible to compare the two cases, and contrast and analyse how neo-Thomist philosophy influenced nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders, and what their similarities and differences can tell us about the historiographical context of the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, by emphasising the role of neo-Thomism, and the Catholic University of Leuven, this thesis provides new insights to the traditional historiographical portrayal of nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century, which will be addressed in the historiographical section. On the one hand, the neglect in traditional historiography to consider the comparison between Quebec and Flanders in the first half of the twentieth century will be assessed. It will be argued that due to the emphasis by social scientists on the comparability of federal systems and sub-state national movements, the comparison between Quebec and Flanders has largely been focused on the second half of the twentieth century, resulting in limited attention to the similarities and differences of the nationalist movements during the first half of the century.¹² On the other hand, it will be shown how the traditional portrayal of nationalist historiography as unscientific and predetermined lays bare an overreliance by researchers on the traditional paradigms to analyse historiography in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Works by historians such as Boily, Gagnon or Tollebeek illustrate how the traditional paradigms of historiographical analysis did not consider the neo-Thomist influence on nationalist historians in both regions, and as such fail to answer

¹⁰ There is one exception, and that is the thorough analysis on the notion of the social question by Yvan Lamonde, see Yvan Lamonde, 'La Trame Des Relations Entre La Belgique Et Le Québec (1830-1940): La Primauté De La Question Sociale', in *La Question Sociale En Belgique Et Au Canada: Xixe-Xxe Siècles*, ed. by Ginette Kurgan-van Hentenryk (Brussels: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1988), pp. 173-84.

¹¹ For a catalogue of Groulx's private library, see Fondation Lionel Groulx, *Bibliothèque Lionel Groulx: Catalogue Des Livres* (2011).

¹² See for example François Rocher, Christian Rouillard, and André Lecours, 'Recognition Claims, Partisan Politics and Institutional Constraints: Belgium, Spain and Canada in a Comparative Perspective', in *Multinational Democracies*, ed. by Alain Gagnon and James Tully (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 176-200.

some of the most intricate questions regarding the theory, nature and practice of nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century.¹³

In addition, one of the most important deficiencies in the traditional historiographical analysis is the lack of the comparative approach, which limits the possibility of framing a nationalist historiography in a transnational framework. Consequently, it is crucial – as will be done in the methodology section – to outline how exactly this thesis compares and contrasts the two cases, and which historians are chosen and compared. Specifically, this thesis will focus on the nationalist historians that either attended the Catholic University of Leuven, or were part of a network in which certain members had enrolled at the University, and the neo-Thomist influence was apparent from their library collection or references. In this sense, the French-Canadian historian Joseph-Ernest Laferrière serves as the prime example for the comparison, as he was a French-Canadian historian that enrolled at Leuven to pursue a degree in history during the first decade of the twentieth century, and would return to Quebec and participate in the historical community through his writings and attendance to the historical conference of 1925.¹⁴ In this sense, Laferrière is considered as a mediating figure to connect the two cases, and to show how both Quebec and Flanders can be considered as part of a larger historiographical context. Out of this characterization, the thesis then pursues a concentric analysis of historiography, which entails an emphasis on prominent historians in the middle, and further expanding the analysis with historians that exhibit the same characteristics necessary for the comparison. The benefit of such a concentric historiographical analysis is that it focuses on the one hand on the most prominent nationalist historians – Hendrik Elias in Flanders and Lionel Groulx in Quebec – of the respective cases, in this sense contributing to the historiographical debates on the life and work of the two historians, whilst, on the other hand, not running the risk of simplifying or reducing nationalist historiography to the works of a limited set of historians. Moreover, by placing the historians that were clearly marked by the neo-Thomist philosophy in the centre of the analysis, it becomes possible to expand the analysis, and highlight how the neo-Thomist influence that was most apparent from these cases can also be highlighted in other examples.

Following the historiographical and methodological premises that have been outlined, the thesis will, in Chapter I, establish the historiographical connection between nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders. It will be argued that French-Canadian nationalist historians during the first half of the twentieth century showed a close affinity to the Catholic historians of the Catholic University of

¹³ See Frédéric Boily, *La Pensée Nationaliste De Lionel Groulx* (Montreal: Septentrion, 2003); Serge Gagnon, *Quebec and Its Historians: 1840 to 1920*. trans. Yves Brunelle (Montreal: Harvest House, 1982); Jo Tollebeek, 'Historiografie', in *Nieuwe Encyclopedie Van De Vlaamse Beweging* (Tiel: Lannoo, 1997), pp. 117-71.

¹⁴ Laferrière's archive is located at the Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe, CH012 Fonds abbé Joseph-Ernest Laferrière.

Leuven. Moreover, the thesis will highlight the influential role Leuven played in the education and development of some of the most prominent Flemish nationalist historians of the interwar period, most notably Hendrik Jozef Elias. It will become clear that the Catholic historians that played a prominent role at the Catholic University of Leuven during the first half of the twentieth century were influential to nationalist historians in both Quebec and Flanders.

Having established the historical connection, the thesis will further highlight in Chapter II the prominence of the neo-Thomist philosophy at the Catholic University of Leuven during this period, and show how the neo-Thomist philosophers that played a crucial role at the University were influential to historians in both Quebec and Flanders, thus further specifying the historiographical connection between the two cases. This leads to an analysis of the specific doctrine and dogmas of the neo-Thomist philosophy as taught at the Catholic University of Leuven, so as to distil the concepts and framework that proved influential to the nationalist historiographies of Quebec and Flanders. By using the works and manuals of three of the most prominent neo-Thomists at Leuven, three essential concepts of the neo-Thomist philosophy will be defined, and will be used as framework to analyse how neo-Thomism influenced the nationalist historiographies in Quebec and Flanders. Following the outline of the framework, the thesis will compare the practice of neo-Thomist chemistry with the nationalist historiographies in Quebec and Flanders. It will be argued that the comparison illustrates how both emphasised the interdependence of the essence and existence of an entity. Moreover, this comparison nuances the portrayal of works such as Boily's who, by aligning French-Canadian nationalist historiography to the writings of the German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder, characterized the nation in this historiography as purely essential.

In Chapter III, the thesis will use the neo-Thomist concept of science to re-evaluate the traditional characterization by historians such as Tollebeek or Gagnon of interwar nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders as unscientific. By illustrating how the neo-Thomist concept of science legitimated a subjective interpretation of objective facts, the neo-Thomist framework provides an answer to the traditional historiographical dilemma of explaining how nationalist historians could legitimate an explicitly subjective and political interpretation as historically scientific. In addition, by comparing how nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders differently represented the scientific nature of their historical works, it is possible to shed new light on the intricate relation between the academic and political context and the use of scientific history to legitimate a political or nationalist interpretation of history. In Chapter IV, the thesis will analyse how the neo-Thomist prominence of the notions of human freedom and ambiguity influenced the teleological perspectives of nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders. It will become clear that the characterization of nationalist historiography as intrinsically predetermined is unsuitable for the nationalist

historiographies in Quebec and Flanders, and leads to a reconsideration of the portrayal of Providence in Quebec nationalist historiography. Moreover, the concepts of ambiguity and human freedom (of choice) in connection to teleology in Flemish nationalist historiography entail a novel explanation as to why the prominent Flemish nationalist historians of this comparison collaborated during the Second World War, and is particularly beneficial in providing a new answer as to why Hendrik Elias continued the collaboration with the German occupier after he became leader of the Flemish National Union in 1942.

Finally, by analysing the influence and relevance of these three fundamental neo-Thomist principles, it will become clear that Flanders and Quebec adapted the neo-Thomist concepts and framework to their specific historical circumstances, illustrating the malleability of the neo-Thomist concepts, and how the different contexts in Quebec and Flanders led to different transformations of the neo-Thomist philosophy. In this sense, the neo-Thomist motto of *vetera novis augere* [the old invigorates the new] which legitimated the revival of Thomist philosophy can be re-applied to the nationalist historiographies of Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century: the neo-Thomist philosophy, as an established philosophical current at the Catholic University of Leuven, would invigorate and influence the nationalist historiographies in Quebec and Flanders, establishing new theories and practices in both cases during the first half of the twentieth century.

Historiography

In this chapter, I will address the historiographical debates and issues which influence this thesis' theoretical and methodological framework, and to which it can simultaneously contribute. In particular, there are two main issues that need to be addressed: the relevance of the comparison between Flanders and Quebec in the first half of the twentieth century, and the characterization of nationalist historiography. In the case of the former, I will highlight how due to the emphasis by social scientists on the comparability of the two cases in a federal framework, the focus on the comparison between Flanders and Quebec has largely been on the second half of the twentieth century, with the rise of the modern sub-state national movements in Quebec and Flanders the focal point of analysis. I will argue that the cultural and political similarities in the two cases' contexts and nationalist movements legitimate the comparison between the two cases and can provide new insights into the comparison of sub-state national movements in the first half of the twentieth century.

In the case of the latter, there are two elements that need to be addressed. First, there is the element of traditional analysis of nationalist historiography. I will illustrate how the historiography of Quebec and Flanders adhered to the traditional analytical framework for historiography and emphasised a single-case study which subsequently limited the possibility of a transnational analysis. Secondly, there is the traditional analysis of nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders which has up to this point not compared the two historical cases, and, consequently, the subject of neo-Thomism, and its connection to the nationalist historiographies. I will argue that by comparing the two historical cases, which showed striking contextual similarities during the first half of the twentieth century, it becomes possible to shed new light on the connection between religion, nationalism, and historiography in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century.

H.1. Contextual outline

To fully understand the relevance of the comparison, it is beneficial to briefly outline the contexts of the two cases, and the nationalist movements in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century. A good starting point is the First World War, which figured as a catalyst in the development of the nationalist movements in both Quebec and Flanders. Prior to the Great War, nationalism in both Quebec and Flanders had developed towards a growing tension with the existing nation-states, Canada and Belgium. In Belgium, this growing national divergence was marked by the slow, gradual development of the Flemish Movement, an amalgam of different political and cultural

actors that were united in their demands for equality for the Dutch-speaking Flemish Belgians.¹⁵ It is important to note that the Flemish Movement, contrary to other nationalist movements in the nineteenth century, was marked, as Miroslav Hroch explains, by a large diversity in political and cultural viewpoints, which were united in a disorganized national framework.¹⁶ In the last decades of the nineteenth century however, with the rise of mass movements, and the expansion of the right to vote in 1893, the Flemish tensions with the Belgian nation-state would simultaneously increase, and the issue of language equality would constitute itself as one of the key political issues in Belgium at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁷ Particularly, the debate revolved around the use of language in higher education, with the Flemish Movement demanding that the University of Ghent, a state-sponsored institute, would become unilingually Dutch, in a similar fashion as the state-sponsored university in Liège, which was unilingually French.¹⁸ In conclusion, the first decade of the twentieth century in Belgium was marked by a growing national and political tension, in which the amalgam of the Flemish Movement was developing into a mass movement that, while still marked by decentralization, was becoming more culturally and politically vocal on the issues of Flemish rights and equality.¹⁹

In Canada, following the foundation of the Confederation through the British North America Act of 1867, there was a similar development of growing national and political tension in which the issues of language rights and education figured prominently. In particular, the issue of the right to teach French in primary and secondary schools in the provinces of Ontario and Manitoba, with both provinces reducing the number of hours French was taught, led to a growing tension amongst English and French-Canadians, and resulted in the formation of new national organizations and movements, most notably the *Ligue des Droits du Français*, which would become the influential nationalist

¹⁵ This was only one of the major cleavages in Belgium politics during this period. See for example Carl Strikwerda, *A House Divided: Catholics, Socialists, and Flemish Nationalists in Nineteenth-Century Belgium* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997); Patrick Hossay, 'Partisans and Nationalists. Rethinking Cleavage Formation and Political Nationalism in Interwar Flanders and Scotland', *Social Science History*, 27 (2003), pp. 170-175.

¹⁶ Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), pp. 116.

¹⁷ Ernst Heinrich Kossmann, *De Lage Landen 1780-1980. Twee Eeuwen Nederland En België* (Amsterdam: Olympus, 2006), pp. 299-309.

¹⁸ See Karel de Clerck, *Kroniek Van De Strijd Voor De Vernederlandsing Van De Gentse Universiteit* (Bruges: Orion, 1980).

¹⁹ Paul Arblaster, *A History of the Low Countries*. 2nd edn (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 198-200; Louis Vos, 'The Flemish National Question', in *Nationalism in Belgium: Shifting Identities (1780-1995)*, ed. by Louis Vos and Kas Deprez (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1998), pp. 83-86.

movement *Action Française* following the Great War.²⁰ Moreover, the British imperial context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century further contributed to the growing divergence between English and French Canadians, with French-Canadian nationalists, under the political leadership of Henri Bourassa, staunchly opposed to Canadian contribution – either military or financially – to the British Empire. This was clear by the fierce opposition Bourassa and the French-Canadian nationalists waged against the participation of Canadian troops in the Boer War of 1899-1902 and the introduction of Wilfrid Laurier's Naval Service Bill of 1910, which envisioned an independent Canadian Navy that could, if necessary, be placed under British control.²¹

During the Great War the tensions in both cases would reach their zenith and would subsequently influence the interwar political and cultural context. In Canada, the national tensions came to their climax when the Borden government proposed conscription in 1917, a move that sparked heavy resistance from the French-Canadian nationalists, once again led by Bourassa.²² The issue, which had forced Borden to call out an election in 1917, was so divisive that some French-Canadians even questioned the future of the province of Quebec in Confederation. This is epitomized in the *Franceour motion* which stated that "the Province of Quebec should be ready to accept a break of the federal pact of 1867 if the other provinces believe Quebec forms an obstacle to the union, and the further progress and development of Canada."²³ In Belgium, this division between Flemish nationalists and the Belgian state came to a more radical conclusion during the Great War. This is partly because of the presence of the German occupier in Belgium during the First World War, who, through its policy of instigating and appeasing Flemish nationalists – known as *Flamenpolitik* – intensified the national and political tensions, as is clear for example in the German founding of a unilingual Dutch university in Ghent in 1916, a direct response to the key political-linguistic issue in Belgian politics during this period.²⁴ Consequently, a section of the Flemish Movement collaborated with the German occupier, causing a rift in the national movement with a small section of Flemish

²⁰ Susan Mann, *Action Française: French Canadian Nationalism in the Twenties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), pp. 6.

²¹ Brian Young, and John Dickinson, *A Short History of Quebec*. 4 edn (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), pp. 249-254; Susan Mann, *Action Française*, pp. 5.

²² Margaret Conrad, *A Concise History of Canada* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 189-199.

²³ For a full transcript of the motion, see <http://www.assnat.qc.ca/en/patrimoine/lexique/motion-francoeur.html>.

²⁴ Kristof Looockx, 'Zonnige Dromen Bezielen De Nieuwe Jeugd. Een Prosopografie Van De Studentenpopulatie Van De Vlaamse Hogeschool (1916-1918).', *Handelingen der maatschappij voor geschiedenis en oudheidkunde te Gent*, 67 (2013), pp. 199-201; <http://www.ugentmemorie.be/gebeurtenissen/1916-de-vlaamsche-hoogeschool>.

nationalists explicitly proposing Flemish independence, as was clear when the collaborating *Raad van Vlaanderen* [Council of Flanders] declared Flemish independence in 1917.²⁵

Following the Great War, the rift in the Flemish Movement would continue to widen, and the political issue of the University of Ghent, and the divergence between collaborating and non-collaborating Flemish nationalists contributed to a Belgian political climate that was highly unstable, as is exemplified by the fact that there were twenty-two different cabinets in Belgium during the interwar period.²⁶ Moreover, the rift subsequently led to the creation of new political parties that strove to advance Flemish political and cultural issues. Consequently, in this political unstable context, extreme-right wing Flemish nationalism was able to flourish, and the creation of the *Vlaamsch Nationaal Verbond* [Flemish National Union] in 1933 under the leadership of Staf de Clercq consolidated the political connection between fascism and Flemish nationalism in Belgium, ultimately resulting in the collaboration of the party with the German Nazis during the Second World War.²⁷ In Canada, the political and cultural tensions did not result in a similar political instability. While there was a growing divergence in the nationalist movement – particularly between Henri Bourassa and the newly founded *Action Française* under leadership of the nationalist historian Lionel Groulx – and the concepts and ideas of extreme right-wing ideologies found fertile ground, the *Action Française*'s effect on the political stability of Quebec and Canada was not as radical as that of the emerging Flemish nationalist parties.²⁸ In this sense, the 1930s did see an expansion of new French-Canadian nationalist movements – most notably the *Jeune Canada* movement – but they maintained a close connection to Groulx and other French-Canadian nationalists, and thus did not cause a similar instability.²⁹

Finally, it should be noted that throughout this period, both nationalist movements were marked by a close adherence to Catholicism which strikes a crucial similarity between the two movements. What this means is that in both Quebec and Flanders, the concept of the nation and nationalism were inextricably linked to religion. Lionel Groulx for example was a Catholic priest, and the purveyance of Catholicism in French-Canadian nationalism was so influential that the historian

²⁵ Lode Wils, *Flamenpolitik En Aktivisme. Vlaanderen Tegenover België in De Eerste Wereldoorlog* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1974), pp. 220-222.

²⁶ Emmanuel Gerard, 'Een Schadelijke Instelling: Kritiek Op Het Parlement in België in Het Interbellum.', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 120 (2005), pp. 504.

²⁷ For more on the Flemish National Union, see Bruno De Wever, *Greep Naar De Macht. Vlaams-Nationalisme En De Nieuwe Orde. Het Vnv 1933-1945* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1994).

²⁸ Jeffrey Cormier, and Philippe Couton, 'The Limits of Quebec Nationalism, 1918–39: An Interwar Paradox', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 4 (1998), pp. 58.

²⁹ For more on the *Jeune Canada* movement and its relation to Groulx, see Yvan Lamonde, 'Les Jeune-Canada Ou Les « Jeune-Laurentie » ?', *Les Cahiers des Dix*, 69 (2009), pp. 175-215; Mathieu Noël, *Lionel Groulx Et Le Réseau Indépendantiste Des Années 1930* (Montreal: VLB éditeur, 2011).

Paul-André Linteau characterized the nationalist movement as a type of *clerico-nationalism*.³⁰ In Flanders, despite the Movement's plethora of different cultural and political ideologies, a large section was Catholic, and, as such, had an influential role. The largest Flemish student union for example, which was crucial in the development of Flemish nationalism during the interwar period, was inextricably linked to Catholicism.³¹

In conclusion, the contextual outline of the nationalist movements in Quebec and Flanders has shown how both regions were marked by growing political and cultural tensions that had been intensified by the Great War, and which would influence the context of nationalism in both Quebec and Flanders during the interwar period. Moreover, the inextricable connection between nationalism and Catholicism in both Flanders and Quebec during the first half of the twentieth century is an important element to emphasise, as it highlights the importance religion had with regards to nationalism during this period. The question however that needs to be addressed now is why the comparison between nationalism in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century has been largely ignored by researchers.

H.2. The Comparison between Quebec and Flanders: a forgotten connection

While there are a number of works that deal with the connection between Flanders and Quebec during the first half of the twentieth century – most recently the work by Céline Préaux on the role of elites in the cities of Montreal and Antwerp – the comparison between Quebec and Flanders, as the social scientist Jan Erk rightly points out, has remained neglected in the field of sub-state nationalism.³² The emphasis on the notion of sub-state nationalism is crucial to highlight, as it helps to shed light on why the comparison itself is often overlooked. Traditionally, sub-state national movements, or “nations without a state”, have been defined, by Montserrat Guibernau for example, as “those territorial communities with their own identity and a desire for self-determination included within the boundaries of one or more states, with which, by and large, they do not identify.”³³ Guibernau further

³⁰ Paul-André Linteau, *Histoire Du Québec Contemporain / Tome 2, Le Québec Depuis 1930*. (Montreal: Boréal, 1989), pp. 700-707

³¹ Louis Vos, *Idealisme En Engagement. De Roeping Van De Katholieke Studerende Jeugd in Vlaanderen (1920-1990)* (Leuven: Acco, 2011), pp. 16-18.

³² See Céline Préaux, *Le Déclin D'une Élite. Francophones D'anvers – Anglophones De Montréal* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2013); Patrick Hossay, *Contentions of Nationhood: Nationalist Movements, Political Conflict, and Social Change in Flanders, Scotland, and French Canada* (New York: Lexington Books, 2002); Jan Erk, 'Le Québec Entre La Flandre Et La Wallonie: Une Comparaison Des Nationalismes Sous-Étatiques Belges Et Du Nationalisme Québécois', *Recherches sociographiques*, 43 (2002), pp. 499-500.

³³ Montserrat Guibernau, 'Anthony D. Smith on Nations and National Identity: A Critical Assessment', *Nations and Nationalism*, 10 (2004), pp. 132. Guibernau's concept of the nation is encapsulated in her seminal work *Nations without a State*. See Montserrat Guibernau, *Nations without States: Political Communities in a Global Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

explains what exactly this identity constitutes, specifying that “the feeling of identity is generally based on their own common culture and history [...] the attachment to a particular territory and an explicit desire for self-determination.”³⁴ It should be noted that, as Erk explains, both Quebec and Flanders are amongst the central cases used to analyse sub-state nationalism. The reason for this is because the notion of sub-state nationalism is analysed in the context of federal institutions, as is clear by the fact that the other prominent cases in the field include Scotland, Catalonia and the Basque Country.³⁵ This emphasis on sub-state nationalism in accordance with federalism has two crucial consequences for the comparison between Quebec and Flanders.

The first is that because of the emphasis on federalism, the comparison has largely focused on the second half of the twentieth century, since Belgium has only officially become a federal state in 1993 after three decades of institutional and constitutional reforms.³⁶ In this sense, the traditional definition of sub-state nationalism which has largely influenced the comparison between Quebec and Flanders can be related to David McCrone’s concept of neo-nationalism which is used to describe the rise of nationalist political parties in sub-state Western nations during the second half of the twentieth century, and which has challenged the traditional theories on nationalist movements.³⁷ Consequently, the emphasis on the rise of political nationalist movements has limited the comparison between nationalism in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century as there was a divergence in the institutional context, and the nationalist movements in both Quebec and Flanders could not be defined as neo-nationalists. This emphasis on the political parties, institutional similarities and sub-state nationalist movements also leads to a second consequence that can help to explain the limited attention. Due to the emphasis on the role of federalism and sub-state nationalism, the comparison between Flanders and Quebec has been mostly conducted in the fields of social and political science, and has received scant attention by historians. In this sense, the notion of comparing

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Jan Erk, 'Is Nationalism Left or Right? Critical Junctures in Québécois Nationalism', *Nations and Nationalism*, 16 (2010), pp. 423.

³⁶ A number of works that illustrate this are Raffaele Iacovino, and Jan Erk, 'The Constitutional Foundation of Multination Federalism: Belgium and Canada', in *Multinational Federalism: Problems and Prospects*, ed. by Michel Seymour and Alain Gagnon (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 205-30; Dimitrios Karmis, and Alain Gagnon, 'Federalism, Federation and Collective Identities in Canada and Belgium: Different Routes. Similar Fragmentation', in *Multinational Democracies*, ed. by Alain Gagnon and James Tully (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 137-75; André Lecours, 'Sub-State Nationalism in the Western World: Explaining Continued Appeal', *Ethnopolitics*, 11 (2012), pp. 268-86; Daniel Béland, and André Lecours, 'Does Nationalism Trigger Welfare-State Disintegration? Social Policy and Territorial Mobilization in Belgium and Canada', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 28 (2010), pp. 420-34.

³⁷ McCrone himself borrows the concept from Tom Nairn to address nations and nationalism in recent decades. See David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Nation* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 188-193; David McCrone, 'Neo-Nationalism in Stateless Nations', *Scottish Affairs*, 37 (2001), pp. 3-13.

nationalist historiography in relation to the religious, political and cultural contexts of the first half of the twentieth century has remained neglected due to the emphasis by social scientists, such as Alain Gagnon for example, on the notion of federal institutions, and the connection between sub-state nationalist movements and federalism during the second half of the twentieth century.³⁸

The consequence of this standard practice in the field of sub-state nationalism is that the traditional definition of sub-state nationalist movements, as outlined by Guibernau, is ill-equipped for the comparison between nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth-century, and needs to be revised. Two elements need to be addressed in relation to the nationalist historiographies of Quebec and Flanders, as they help to re-define the concept to better suit the context of the first half of the twentieth century. The first element is the emphasis in Guibernau's definition on the notion of self-determination. Guibernau stresses that "self-determination, sometimes defined as political autonomy, does not always involve the independence of the nation, although it often includes the right to secession," thus ascribing a political spectrum to sub-state nationalism that transcends the notion of political independence.³⁹

The problem however with this notion of self-determination, in connection to the two cases of this thesis, is that it is limited to a political perspective, and does not consider the cultural advancements or arguments for self-determination that are crucial to the concept of nationalist historiography. In the context of the first half of the twentieth century, this notion of a clearly outlined political programme by a sub-state nationalist movement is untenable as it restricts the fluidity of cultural and political interchange that marked both movements. This is particularly relevant for the Flemish Movement, which, as mentioned earlier, was marked by an amalgam of different political and cultural viewpoints, each related to the notion of Flemish self-determination. The Flemish Movement during the interwar period comprised of different Flemish nationalist political parties – most notably the Front Party, Verdinaso and the Flemish National Union – in addition to proponents of Flemish self-determination that were connected to the traditional Belgian liberal, catholic or socialist parties, thus further obfuscating the traditional definition of sub-state nationalism and its applicability to the Flemish context of the first half of the twentieth century.⁴⁰

Secondly, the traditional definition of what constitutes the identity of a sub-state nationalist movement poses problems for its applicability to Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the

³⁸ See Alain Gagnon, and James Tully, *Multinational Democracies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³⁹ Montserrat Guibernau, 'Anthony D. Smith on Nations,' pp. 132.

⁴⁰ For a thorough overview of the right-wing ideologies in relation to intellectuals and political parties in Flanders, see Olivier Boehme, *Revolutie Van Rechts En Intellectuelen in Vlaanderen Tijdens Het Interbellum: Ideeënhistorische Bijdragen*. 2nd edn (Leuven: Acco, 2010).

twentieth century. In particular, there are two elements that need to be addressed in order to redefine the concept. First, there is the element that a shared history and culture is, especially in relation to the concept of nationalist historiography, not as conventional as it seems at first glance. Both in Quebec and Flanders, the idea of a shared history was contested throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The work by the historian Marnix Beyen for example has shown how Flemish nationalist historiography was only one of a number of historical interpretations that were present during the interwar period, and was in contention not only with the traditional Belgian interpretation, but other frameworks, including the Great-Netherlandish, which envisioned history from the perspective of all Dutch-speaking regions in the Low Countries, thus excluding the French-speaking regions of Belgium.⁴¹ A typical example for this interchangeability of the historical framework during this period is the work of the historian Leo [Léon] van der Essen, who had written a historical work from the Belgian perspective, *Pour mieux comprendre notre histoire nationale* [To better understand our national history], from the Great-Netherlandish point of view, *De Historische gebondenheid der Nederlanden* [The historical bond of the Netherlands], and, after the war, contributed to the *Algemeene geschiedenis der Nederlanden* [General History of the Low Countries], a historical framework that included both the Dutch-speaking and French-speaking regions in Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.⁴²

This interchangeability of historical perspectives also leads to the second element: the fluidity and ambiguity of the territoriality of the sub-state nation during this period.⁴³ A crucial consequence of the contending historical frameworks in Quebec and Flanders is that the constitution of territoriality in the sub-state nationalist movements was much more ambiguous than it would be in the second half of the twentieth century. The ambiguity of territoriality was already apparent from the different historical frameworks in which Flanders as a territorial entity was encapsulated, and the same territorial ambiguity was clearly present in French-Canadian nationalism. In general, there were two perspectives that each constituted an end of the nationalist spectrum. This was illustrated very clearly in the famous debate between Henri Bourassa and the ultramontane Jules-Paul Tardivel. In 1904, Tardivel explained his vision on nationalism, stating that "our nationalism is French-Canadian

⁴¹ See in particular Marnix Beyen, *Oorlog En Verleden. Nationale Geschiedenis in België En Nederland, 1938-1947* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002), pp. 385-412; Marnix Beyen, 'Natural-Born Nations? National Historiography in Belgium and the Netherlands between a 'Tribal' and Social-Cultural Paradigm, 1900-1950', *Storia della Storiografia*, 38 (2000), pp. 33-58.

⁴² For more on Van der Essen, see Claude Bruneel, 'Van Der Essen, Leon', in *Nouvelle Biographie Nationale* (Liege: Groupe Graphique Chauveheid, 2003), pp. 357-360.

⁴³ It is interesting to note that the concept of sub-state nationalism is closely related to the notion of territorial politics, see for example Michael Keating, *State and Regional Nationalism: Territorial Politics and the European State* (Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988).

nationalism [...] The patriotism we wish to see flourish is French-Canadian patriotism [...] For us, the homeland, while not precisely the province of Quebec, is French Canada. The nation we wish to see founded at the hour set by divine providence is the French-Canadian nation.”⁴⁴ As a reaction to this conceptualization, Bourassa replied that “our nationalism is a Canadian nationalism founded on the duality of races and the distinctive traditions which that duality implies [...] the homeland for us is the whole of Canada, that is to say, a federation of distinct races and autonomous province.”⁴⁵ It should be noted that these two perspectives – a pan-Canadian perspective and Quebec-centred emphasis – have to be considered as the extreme ends of the spectrum, and French-Canadian nationalism during the first half of the twentieth century can be characterized as balancing between the two ends of the spectrum, thus reinforcing the notion of territorial ambiguity.⁴⁶

What the comparison between Quebec and Flanders thus illustrates is the untenability of the traditional definition of sub-state nationalism, compelling us to redefine the concept of sub-state nationalism to provide a theoretical basis for this thesis. In this sense, the novel definition takes into account the aspects of fluidity – both territorially and historically – and the congruence of the political and cultural aspects of the nationalist movements in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century. Based on these two elements, this thesis defines a sub-nationalist movement as *a community included within the boundaries of one or more states, with which, by and large, they may and/or may not identify, and whose conceptualization of culture and history determines its territoriality and cultural and political desires for self-determination*. By emphasising the relation between the conceptualization of history and the political, cultural and territorial demands of the sub-nationalist movements, this definition stresses, in addition to addressing the plurality and fluidity of the movements in Quebec and Flanders, the importance of historiography in both sub-nationalist movements.

In addition to definition of the concept of sub-nationalism, it is important to address another element that can help to explain why the comparison between Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century has remained underdeveloped, and how this thesis can contribute to the

⁴⁴ Martin O'Connell, 'The Ideas of Henri Bourassa', *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 19 (1953), pp. 362. For an extensive discussion on the debate between Tardivel and Bourassa and the diverging interpretation of French-Canadian nationalism, see James Kennedy, *Liberal Nationalisms: Empire, State, and Civil Society in Scotland and Quebec* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), pp. 258-263.

⁴⁵ O'Connell, 'The Ideas of Henri Bourassa', pp. 363.

⁴⁶ For more on Groulx and his relation to both French America and the minorities outside Quebec, see Michel Bock, 'Les Franco-Ontariens Et Le «Réveil» De La Nation: La Crise Du Règlement XVII Dans Le Parcours Intellectuel De Lionel Groulx', *Francophonies d'Amérique*, 13 (2002), pp. 157-77; Michel Bock, *A Nation Beyond Borders, Lionel Groulx on French-Canadian Minorities*. trans. Ferdinanda Van Gennip (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2014).

historiography of both regions. Quebec researchers, when comparing, have largely focused on the position of Quebec in the Francophone world.⁴⁷ This emphasis on the historical connection between French Canada and France has two consequences which need to be addressed. First, the focus on the Francophone element has led to a preference by researchers in Quebec on other Francophone cases, partly due to the practical issue of the Dutch language which, as the historian Pasture acknowledged, has contributed to the limited attention for the Flemish case.⁴⁸ The work for example by Christophe Traisnel which compares the sovereignty movement in Quebec with the French-speaking Walloon movement in Belgium can be seen as an indication of this practice.⁴⁹

Secondly, by prioritizing the historiographical connection between France and Quebec the transnational nature of historiography and the Francophone community in the first half of the twentieth century has remained neglected. By focusing primarily on France as a comparative case, researchers have failed to take into account the transnational nature of the Francophone community and neglected the role and influence of the Belgian and Swiss French Catholic contexts on Quebec. An exception to this practice, and an influential piece for this thesis, is the essay "La trame des relations entre la Belgique et le Québec (1830-1940)" by the historian Yves Lamonde in *La question sociale en Belgique et au Canada, XIXe-XXe siècles*, which traces the prominence of the social question in Quebec and Belgium, and highlights the importance and influence Belgium had on Quebec.⁵⁰ By stressing the importance of the transnational context of the Francophone and Catholic communities in the first half of the twentieth century, it becomes possible for this thesis to shed new light on the historiographical practices of both Flanders and Quebec, and the role neo-Thomism had on the conceptualization and development of nationalist historiography in both cases. Moreover, the neglect of the transnational nature of historiography in the first half of the twentieth century can be partly ascribed to the common practice of historiographical analysis in both Quebec and Flanders, which will be further discussed in the following section.

⁴⁷ See for example Patrick-Michel Noël, and Martin Pâquet, 'L'hexagone Et La Disciplinarisation De L'histoire Au Québec. L'influence Française Sur L'historiographie Québécoise, 1895-1963', *Bulletin d'histoire politique*, 20 (2011), pp. 98-112; David Meren, *With Friends Like These. Entangled Nationalisms and the Canada-Quebec-France Triangle, 1944-1970* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012).

⁴⁸ Patrick Pasture, 'Views from Abroad. Foreign Historians on a Small State by the North Sea. With Reflections on Historical Writing in Belgium and Elsewhere', *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis*, 35 (2005), pp. 413-414.

⁴⁹ Christophe Traisnel, 'Entre Unité Et Diversité. Le Discours Identitaire Du Mouvement Souverainiste Au Québec Et Du Mouvement Wallon En Communauté Française Wallonie-Bruxelles', *Lien social et Politiques*, 53 (2005), 93-104.

⁵⁰ Yvan Lamonde, 'La Trame Des Relations Entre La Belgique Et Le Québec (1830-1940): La Primauté De La Question Sociale', in *La Question Sociale En Belgique Et Au Canada: Xixe-Xxe Siècles*, ed. by Ginette Kurgan-van Hentenryk (Brussels: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1988), pp. 173-84.

H.3. Historiographical Analysis in Quebec and Flanders: the unscientific political historian.

In addition to the comparison, this thesis addresses three issues that are related to the general practice of historiography, and the traditional portrayal of nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century. The first issue is that this thesis concurs with the argument made by historians such as Chris Lorenz and Jürgen Kocka that a comparative historical analysis is preferred over a single-case historiographical approach.⁵¹ In particular, there are two notions that need to be further highlighted with regards to the benefits of a comparative historiographical approach, and its relevance to the historiography of Quebec and Flanders. The first is that a comparative historical analysis can help to avoid the pitfalls of a traditional historiographical analysis. These pitfalls are, as Lorenz explains, a consequence of the peculiar nature of a historiographical analysis, which consists of a “double trouble” because it analyses the historical works of a specific historical circumstance on the one hand, and the historiographical comments and critiques on said works on the other hand.⁵² By incorporating a comparative historiographical analysis, the risk of reproducing the traditional portrayal (and by consequence pitfalls) of a specific historiography are reduced, and it becomes possible to provide new insights to a historiography.

In the case of Quebec historiography it becomes possible for example to avoid and nuance the traditional portrayal by nationalist historians such as Groulx as Quebec history as a unique case, by comparing the nationalist historiography with the Flemish case, and illustrating their adherence to a larger historiographical tradition.⁵³ Conversely, by comparing the Flemish nationalist historiography with a North American case, it becomes possible to provide new insights to the intricacies of Flemish nationalist historiography. This emphasis on two historiographical cases is the second notion that is addressed, namely the practice in historiography of focusing on a single national case. While recently there have been a number of works that analyse nineteenth and twentieth century historiography from a European or global perspective – most notably the works published under the guidance of the historian Stefan Berger – the historiographical analysis in both Quebec and Flanders has remained

⁵¹ See Jürgen Kocka, 'Comparison and Beyond', *History and Theory*, 42 (2003), pp. 39-44; Chris Lorenz, 'Comparative Historiography: Problems and Perspectives', *History and Theory*, 38 (1999), pp. 25-39; Jürgen Kocka, and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, *Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), pp. 1-30; Espagne, Michel. 2013. 'Comparison and Transfer: A Question of Method.' in Matthias Middell and Lluís Roura (eds.), *Transnational Challenges to National History Writing* (Palgrave Macmillan: New York).

⁵² Chris Lorenz, 'Double Trouble: A Comparison of the Politics of National History in Germany and in Quebec', in *Nationalizing the Past: Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe*, ed. by Chris Lorenz and Stefan Berger (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 52.

⁵³ Chris Lorenz, 'Double Trouble', pp. 57-70.

limited to a single case, and, as such, researchers have focused solely on Flemish or Quebec (institutional) frameworks to analyse and explain nationalist historiography.⁵⁴ Ronald Rudin's work on Quebec historiography and Jo Tollebeek's on the historiography of the Flemish Movement are indicative of this practice, and both highlight the shortcomings of the traditional historiographical practice, and the relevance of a comparative historiographical analysis, which leads to the second issue this thesis addresses.⁵⁵

Because of the adherence to the traditional historiographical practices, researchers have portrayed the nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century in a similar manner. Particularly, there are two similarities which this thesis reconsiders. The first is the emphasis made by researchers on the discontinuity between the first and second half of the twentieth century, with the Second World War as a caesura for the analysis of historiography. The Quebec historian Fernand Ouellet for example argued that "the revival of [Quebec] historiography which began with the establishment of the first two history departments, in 1946 at the Université de Montréal and in 1947 at Laval, really started to bear fruit only in the 1960s," indicating a clear distinction between the era before and after the Second World War.⁵⁶ In a similar manner, the historian Jo Tollebeek discerned a moment of renewal in Flemish historiography following the Second World War, pointing to the publication of different monographies and source material which gave an impetus to the study of history of the Flemish Movement following the Second World War.⁵⁷ It should be noted that the caesura is beneficial in portraying the transformation of practices that underlined historiography in both Quebec and Flanders, and this thesis, by limiting its focus to the first half of the twentieth century, recognizes the relevance of the caesura. The problem however with the traditional portrayal of the caesura is the implicit teleology it propagates, an element that has been addressed by historians in both Quebec and Flanders. Marnix Beyen for example has criticized Tollebeek's portrayal of historiography, pointing out that the harsh caesura between the two periods implicitly advocates a "triumphalist" perspective of the historiography in which the second half of the twentieth century culminated in the triumph of an impartial and objective analysis of the historiography of the

⁵⁴ Work included in the *The Writing of National Histories in Europe* series is, Ilaria Porciani, and Jo Tollebeek, *Setting the Standards: Institutions, Networks and Communities of National Historiography* (Basingstoke Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); also see Stefan Berger, *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁵⁵ See Ronald Rudin, *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Jo Tollebeek, 'Historiografie', in *Nieuwe Encyclopedie Van De Vlaamse Beweging* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1997), pp. 117-71.

⁵⁶ F. Ouellet, *The socialization of Quebec historiography since 1960*, Toronto, 1988, pp. 5.

⁵⁷ Tollebeek, 'Historiografie', pp. 121-122.

Flemish Movement.⁵⁸ Similarly, the historian Rudin criticized the “triumphant tone of much Quebec historiographical writing” which portrayed Quebec historiography following the Second World War, in the words of Ouellet, as a revival, implying the success or triumph in the second half of the twentieth century of a historiographical practice which was, according to the researchers, superior to its predecessor.⁵⁹

The consequence of this implicit triumphant portrayal is that the nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century is portrayed as unscientific and politically motivated, which is the second similarity that this thesis addresses. Tollebeek for example concluded his overview of the historiography during the interwar period by explaining how there was an intricate “connection between history and politics”, concluding that “a lot was political propaganda.”⁶⁰ Moreover, the historian Lode Wils emphasised the prominence of politics in interwar Flemish nationalist historiography by using the caesura as a clear demarcation when he stated that “up until the 1960s, before universities took up the subject, the historiography of the Flemish Movement was left to the flamingants [Flemish activists], and was thus inextricably connected to their propaganda [...] which was not necessarily intended.”⁶¹ In a likewise manner, historians in Quebec traditionally described nationalist historiography during the first half of the twentieth century as unscientific, and used the caesura as a clear demarcation. Historian Serge Gagnon for example characterized the historiography by explaining that these historians’ “conviction [was] that scholarship was useful in so far as it served the interests of the national group. Such scholarship had a mission to raise French-Canadian consciousness and stimulate action, and had no room for those not imbued with this sense of duty toward society.”⁶² It is imperative to note that this demarcation between an unscientific and scientific historiography in twentieth-century Quebec can be embedded in the larger historiographical debate on the history of Quebec nationalism, and particularly the debates on the importance of the social changes in Quebec during the 1960s, also known as the Quiet Revolution.⁶³ It is primarily the concept of the Quiet Revolution that has contributed to the dialectic portrayal of twentieth-century Quebec history, in which the period preceding the 1960s was portrayed as *La*

⁵⁸ Marnix Beyen, 'Een Uitdijend Verhaal: De Historiografie Van De Vlaamse Beweging 1995-2005', *Wetenschappelijke Tijdingen*, 64 (2005), pp. 29.

⁵⁹ Ronald Rudin, *Making History*, pp. 15; also see Ronald Rudin, 'Revisionism and the Search for a Normal Society: A Critique of Recent Quebec Historical Writing', *Canadian Historical Review*, 73 (1992), pp. 30-61.

⁶⁰ Jo Tollebeek, 'Historiografie', in *Nieuwe Encyclopedie Van De Vlaamse Beweging* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1997), pp. 119-120.

⁶¹ Lode Wils, 'De Stand Van Het Onderzoek Naar De Vlaamse Beweging', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 79 (2001), pp. 1283.

⁶² Serge Gagnon, *Quebec and Its Historians: The Twentieth Century* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1985), pp. 19.

⁶³ See for example Pierre Godin, *La Fin De La Grande Noirceur: La Révolution Tranquille* (Montreal: Boréal, 1991).

Grande Noirceur [The Great Darkness], and its emphasis on Catholicism and tradition was diametrically opposed to the modernization and social changes that would sweep Quebec society during the second half of the twentieth century.⁶⁴

An illustrating example of this unscientific/scientific demarcation in Quebec historiography is the *Parole des historiens*, an anthological work edited by the historians Éric Bédard and Julien Goyette. The work, which is comprised of historical texts of Quebec historiography since the 1800s, is divided in three main sections: A “time of Ancients” which is followed by the “era of modernization”, which is located after the Second World War, and ultimately concludes with the “modernist era” and subsequent critiques of said paradigm in the last decades of the twentieth century.⁶⁵ By dividing Quebec historiography in essentially two main eras – an Ancient and Modern – the work can be considered as adhering to the traditional portrayal of interwar Quebec historiography as unscientific, and situates the emergence of a modern, scientific historiographical practice after the Second World War.

In recent years, however, researchers have questioned this portrayal of Quebec and Flemish historiography. There have been two major points of critique. First, in accordance with the previous point, researchers have questioned the harsh demarcation between the two halves of the twentieth century, and have criticized the implicit teleological premise of this perspective. In Quebec, this has resulted in a reconsideration of the dialectic between the *Grande Noirceur* and the Quiet Revolution. Researchers such as Jean-Philippe Warren or Yvan Lamonde have nuanced the traditional portrayal of interwar Quebec as a conservative, Catholic society by highlighting the intricacies of Catholicism to incorporate modernist thoughts and philosophies, illustrating how questions of social action influenced Quebec society during this period.⁶⁶ Moreover, works such as *The Catholic origins of Quebec's Quiet Revolution* by the historian Michael Gavreau have questioned the traditional dialectic between a Catholic pre-war and Modern post-war Quebec society, arguing for a reconsideration of

⁶⁴ For more on the construction of this narrative, see Jocelyn Létourneau, 'La Production Historienne Courante Portant Sur Le Québec Et Ses Rapports Avec La Construction Des Figures Identitaires D'une Communauté Communicationnelle', *Recherches sociographiques*, 36 (1995), pp. 9-45; Gérard Bouchard, 'L'imaginaire De La Grande Noirceur Et De La Révolution Tranquille: Fictions Identitaires Et Jeux De Mémoire Au Québec', *Recherches sociographiques*, 46 (2005), pp. 411-36.

⁶⁵ Éric Bédard, and Julien Goyette, *Parole D'historiens. Anthologie Des Réflexions Sur L'histoire Au Québec* (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2006), pp. 483-487.

⁶⁶ See É.-Martin Meunier, and Jean-Philippe Warren, *Sortir De La « Grande Noirceur ». L'horizon « Personnaliste » De La Révolution Tranquille*, Sillery (Septentrion: 2002); Yvan Lamonde, 'La Trame Des Relations Entre La Belgique Et Le Québec'; Jean-Philippe Warren, 'Maritain, Le Renouveau Thomiste Et L'enseignement De La Philosophie Au Québec', *Recherches sociographiques*, 52 (2011), pp. 881-892; Michel Florian, *La Pensée Catholique En Amérique Du Nord: Réseaux Intellectuels Et Échanges Culturels Entre L'europe, Le Canada Et Les États-Unis (Années 1920–1960)* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2010).

the interplay between Catholicism and modernity that not only influenced the interwar, but also subsequent periods in Quebec history.⁶⁷

The consequence of this reconsideration of the traditional caesura has also led, secondly, to a re-evaluation of the portrayal of Quebec and Flemish historiography as unscientific. Ronald Rudin for example criticized the traditional portrayal of Groulx and other nationalist historians, in his *Making History in Twentieth-century Quebec*, stating that “I have departed from the standard periodization, which usually posits a pre-professional era, dominated by Lionel Groulx, which came to an end after the Second World War, when a new generation of lay professionals emerged.”⁶⁸ This reconsideration of the traditional demarcation of Quebec historiography was further enhanced by the works of Patrice Régimbald and Gérard Bouchard. Through her analysis of the emergence of historical institutions and networks in Quebec prior and after the Second World War, Régimbald argued for a nuanced reconsideration of the traditional demarcation, illustrating the convergence of modern and classical approaches to the historical science that defined interwar Quebec historiography.⁶⁹ Similarly, Bouchard advocated for a re-interpretation of the nationalist historian Lionel Groulx in his work *Deux Chanoines*, by arguing that Groulx had to be considered as a paradox, simultaneously illustrating a modern and traditional approach to history and historiography.⁷⁰ This reconsideration of the nationalist historians in the interwar period is also apparent from Flemish historiography. Having illustrated the traditional portrayal of Flemish nationalist historiography, Marnix Beyen questioned its validity, explaining how “the Flamingant discourse on the past has largely been shaped by respected historians, such as Paul Frederic, Robert van Roosbroeck, and Hendrik Elias.”⁷¹

This thesis concurs with these recent developments in historiography, but it is crucial to point out how this thesis differs from these reconsiderations. In particular, the problem with this re-interpretation of interwar nationalist historiography is that it adheres to the same framework which concluded that nationalist historiography was unscientific, and, as such, fails to take into account the intricacies of the period and their relevance to historiography. This is illustrated clearly in the works by Bouchard and Rudin. Rudin, who had criticized the distinction between a professional and non-professional historiography in Quebec wanted to illustrate how Groulx and Quebec historiography

⁶⁷ Michael Gavreau, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec's Quiet Revolution, 1931-1970* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).

⁶⁸ Ronald Rudin, *Making history*, pp. 11;

⁶⁹ Patrice Régimbald, 'La Disciplinarisation De L'histoire Au Canada Français, 1920-1950', *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 51 (1997), pp. 161-200.

⁷⁰ Gérard Bouchard, *Les Deux Chanoines: Contradiction Et Ambivalence Dans La Pensée De Lionel Groulx* (Montreal: Boréal, 2003).

⁷¹ Beyen, 'Een Uitdijend Verhaal', pp. 29.

prior to the Second World War could be considered as professional, scientific historiography, as it shared the ideal with its successors to pursue objectivity in history.⁷² Consequently, based on the similarity of the practice, Rudin argued that Quebec historiography during the interwar period showed the precursors of the post-war historiography, focusing on the creation of historical institutions and events and conferences as an indication that the distinction was incorrect.⁷³

There are however two elements in this portrayal that need to be questioned. The first is, in accordance with the historian Jean-Marie Fecteau's critique of Rudin's work, that Rudin, by adhering to the traditional framework used to analyse nationalist historiography, fails to take into account the specific historiographical context of the first half of the twentieth century.⁷⁴ The problematic consequence of Rudin's approach to historiography – which stated that objectivity, however defined, is always the goal of the historical practice – is that by prioritizing the similarities between the different eras the historian ignores the specific historiographical context and practices of the first half of the twentieth century that distinguished it from its successor. In this sense, Rudin continues to adhere to the traditional framework to analyse Quebec historiography, not to prove the unscientific, but scientific nature of nationalist historiography. The problem however is that this position and framework are untenable when it comes to analysing nationalist historiography in the first half of the twentieth century, an element that is illustrated clearly in Gérard Bouchard's work, *Les deux chanoines*.

In his analysis of the nationalist historian Lionel Groulx, Bouchard portrayed the historian as a living paradox, "put[ting] forward opinions that were divergent and incompatible, affirming both black and white."⁷⁵ Using the traditional framework for analysing nationalist historiography, Bouchard portrayed Groulx's historical works as a paradox, arguing that "on the one hand, [he wrote] as a visionary, a doctrinarian, a man of action, while on the other hand as a rigorous researcher, as a scientist. But in the decisive passages, the former would sustain and correct the latter."⁷⁶ In this sense, Bouchard's portrayal takes the traditional framework to its extreme end, and consequently shows its fallacy by positing that the nature of nationalist historiography during the first half of the twentieth century is unintelligible. Consequently, Bouchard illustrates, similarly as Rudin, how adhering strictly to the traditional framework fails to explain the distinct context of the first half of the twentieth century.

⁷² Ronald Rudin, *Making history*, pp. 3-11.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-92.

⁷⁴ Jean-Marie Fecteau, 'Between Scientific Enquiry and the Search for a Nation Quebec Historiography as Seen by Ronald Rudin', *Canadian Historical Review*, 80 (1999), pp. 645.

⁷⁵ Gérard Bouchard, *Les Deux Chanoines*, pp. 12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 195.

Moreover, Bouchard's paradox illustrates the necessity to reconsider the nature of historiography – the second element – and more importantly the need to not focus solely on the historical institutional context to analyse nationalist historiography in both Quebec and Flanders. This is a point raised by Beyen in his critique of traditional Flemish historiography which this thesis supports. Beyen raised the question how “it would be interesting to ascertain how in the historiographical work of these [nationalist historians] science and philosophy were reconciled, and to what extent they were, or weren't, influenced by external judgements on the history of their [Flemish] movement?”⁷⁷ This thesis, by focusing on the influence of neo-Thomism on nationalist historiography in both Flanders and Quebec, wants to address this question, and, by consequence, will be able to provide new arguments and insights to the hitherto unintelligible paradox of nationalist historiography, and subsequently nuance Bouchard's characterization of Groulx and Quebec historiography.

By considering the external influences on historiography, this thesis addresses a third and final issue that stems from the traditional historiographical analysis, and the general characterization of nationalist historiography. To understand this issue, it is beneficial to briefly outline how the connection between nationalism and historiography has generally been portrayed, and how the characterization of nationalism influenced the assessment of nationalist historiography. In his assessment of the relation between historians and nationalism, the scholar of nationalism Anthony Smith argued that “historians have generally seen nationalism as a doctrine or principle or argument; it has been *nationalism* rather than the nation that has exercised their imagination, with a few exceptions. This doctrine or principle has often been regarded as an *idée fixe*, a motive force that remains constant beneath its many disguises.”⁷⁸ By portraying nationalism as a fixed doctrine, historians traditionally described and analysed the philosophical underpinnings of the doctrine, and traced its practical realization in different historical contexts. A clear example of this connection between an underlying general doctrine and different specific historical contexts is the influence of the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder on different nationalist movements, and by consequence, historiographies. Herder ascribed a prominent role to the nation in his philosophy of history, explaining how “nature educates families: the most natural state therefore is *one* nation with one national character [...] for a nation is as much a natural plant as a family, only with more

⁷⁷ Beyen, ‘Een Uitdijend Verhaal’, pp. 29.

⁷⁸ Anthony Smith, ‘Nationalism and the Historians’, *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 33 (1992), pp. 58.

branches.”⁷⁹ Out of this representation, the historians’ traditional typology of nationalism adhered to two crucial principles.

The first was the organic representation of the nation, which implied that a nation, as would any other natural being, was born in a specific period, and would continue to grow throughout the ages, ultimately resulting in a distinct entity with specific traits and culture and language. Herder made this point clear when he explained how “every distinct people is a nation, having its own national culture as it has its own language. The climate, it is true, may imprint on each its peculiar stamp, or it may spread over it a slight veil, but still without destroying its original character.”⁸⁰ By describing each nation as distinct, comprised of a national character that is unaffected by time, the typology was traditionally defined as essentialist, which is simultaneously the second element that underpinned the typology. The typology thus defined the nation as an organic, distinct entity whose essence would naturally grow throughout history, and whose essence was transferred from generation to generation.

Moreover, this typology and reliance on Herder are apparent in both Quebec and Flanders. Frédéric Boily for example related Groulx’s work to Herder, ascribing the Groulx’s concept of the nation to the traditional typology.⁸¹ Similarly, Beyen distilled this typology in Belgian, Flemish, and Dutch historiography, describing how historians “[sought] in the presence of prehistoric or early-medieval tribes on ‘national’ soil [...] – more or less explicitly – the ethnic resources with which History would fashion at a later stage the nation.”⁸² Beyen would further specify how, in this historiographical practice, “concepts such as ‘national character’, ‘national soul’ or ‘national power’ do somehow suggest the existence of a ‘national body’ which remains unchanged in spite of political, social or cultural evolutions.”⁸³ While this thesis does not challenge the connection between Herder’s philosophy and the nationalist conception in Flanders and Quebec – different Flemish historians, including Lode Wils, have shown how Elias had contributed to an analysis of Herder’s philosophy after the Second World War – it asserts the risk of taking the typology at face-value, thereby neglecting other influences to the conceptualization of nationalist historiography in both regions.⁸⁴ This becomes clear in Boily’s assessment of Herder’s influence on Groulx. The issue in this analysis is, as Boily states himself, and which has been noted by his critics, that Groulx “to my knowledge, never cites Herder

⁷⁹ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, trans. T. Churchill (New York: Bergman Publishers, 1966), pp. 249

⁸⁰ Quoted in Russell Arben Fox, ‘J.G. Herder on Language and the Metaphysics of National Community’, *The Review of Politics*, 65 (2003), pp. 253.

⁸¹ Frédéric Boily, *La Pensée Nationaliste De Lionel Groulx*, pp. 22-31.

⁸² Beyen, ‘Een Uitdijend Verhaal’, pp. 36.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Lode Wils, ‘Elias of Het Gevecht Met De Democratie’, *Wetenschappelijke Tijdingen*, 65 (2006), pp. 42.

nor has any works of the thinker in his private library, even though it is well stocked.”⁸⁵ By transferring Herder’s typology to a specific historiographical context that has no clear connection to his philosophy, the issue arises in Boily’s analysis of a typological overreach that not only tries to demonstrate an indemonstrable influence on a specific historiography, but also runs the risk of downplaying the specific historiographical context. This is a crucial issue that is addressed by this thesis by focusing on the historians’ historical works, and establishing a clearly demonstrable historiographical connection between the two cases before assessing the influence of neo-Thomism on both historiographies, an element that will be further discussed in the Methodology section.

In conclusion, the three issues raised in this section, and the novelty of the comparison itself, illustrate how this thesis is able to provide new insights into nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders. Moreover, by addressing each issue raised in this section, and by incorporating a transnational approach through the comparison of the Quebec and Flemish cases, it becomes possible for this thesis to not only contribute to the analysis and characterization of both historiographies, but to comment and give novel interpretations to the practice of historiographical analysis in general. In this sense, the outline of the historiography has shown how this thesis positions itself in the debates in both historiographies, and how through its comparison and comments on the traditional portrayal and analysis, is able to bring a novel perspective and interpretation to both historiographies. The question that now needs to be asked is how these three issues, and the comparison between Quebec and Flanders, have influenced the methodology of this thesis.

⁸⁵ Frédéric Boily, *La Pensée Nationaliste*, pp. 25; Michel Bock, 'Review Boily, Frédéric, *La Pensée Nationaliste* De Lionel Groulx (Sillery, Le Septentrion, 2003), 232 P.', *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 58 (2004), pp. 247-248; Norman Cornett, 'Review *La Pensée Nationaliste*', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 91 (2005), pp. 880-882.

Methodology

Having demonstrated the main issues in the traditional portrayal and analysis of nationalist historiography in Flanders and Quebec during the first half of the twentieth century, this chapter outlines how these issues affect the methodology of this thesis, and how this influenced the method and approach to the comparison of nationalist historiography. Three elements will illustrate how the methodology of this thesis is conceptualized. First, this thesis wants to avoid the risk of historiographical overreach by establishing a clear historical connection between the two regions during the first half of the twentieth century. In this sense, the analysis of the role of the Catholic University of Leuven in the formation and education of both French-Canadian and Flemish historians exemplifies this historical and historiographical connection without risking a historiographical overreach or distilling a historiographical tradition or influence that may not be apparent from the historical works themselves.

This leads, secondly, to the use of sources in this thesis. To illustrate as clearly as possible the historiographical influence of neo-Thomism on the two cases, and their contextual differences, this thesis has chosen to emphasise the published historical works as the main source for analysis, as these published works entail a public dimension that is beneficial to the comparison between the neo-Thomist influence on Flemish and Quebec nationalist historiography. The one exception – the archive of the French-Canadian historian Joseph-Ernest Laferrière – is founded on the author's unique position in the comparison as a trained French-Canadian historian at the Catholic University of Leuven. In this sense, Laferrière's archive is seen as the perfect mediator to firmly establish the historical and

historiographical connection between Flanders and Quebec during this period, and thus reduce the risk of comparing the two cases on indemonstrable, hypothetical grounds.

Finally, by taking into account the critiques and comments on the traditional portrayal and practice of historiographical analysis, this thesis reconsiders how to pursue a historiographical analysis which emphasises certain prominent historians on the one hand, whilst on the other hand avoids the pitfall of reducing a (nationalist) historiography to the writings of solely the prominent historians. Through the introduction of the concept of a concentric historiographical analysis, which puts at its centre the most prominent nationalist historians for comparison, and from there on out expands to other historians, this thesis can illustrate how the philosophy of neo-Thomism influenced nationalist historiography in both Quebec and Flanders, and on the other hand avoid the pitfall of reducing the analysis of historiography to only the writings of the prominent historians, keeping in mind the larger historiographical context in both cases. Having established the historiographical similarities and overlap, it then becomes possible to compare the two cases' historiographies and the influence of neo-Thomism. By analysing three influential neo-Thomists at the Catholic University of Leuven, three important neo-Thomist concepts are distilled and used as an overall framework in which the two cases are compared.

M.1. Comparative analysis: establishing a shared historiographical tradition

One of the main issues that was raised in the historiography chapter was the risk of historiographical overreach that stems from applying (nationalist) historiographical typologies to specific historical circumstances, illustrated most clearly by the political scientist Frederic Boily's analysis of the French-Canadian nationalist historian Groulx through the Herderian typology, even though, as he indicated himself, Groulx "to my knowledge, never cites Herder nor has any works of the thinker in his private library, even though it is well stocked."⁸⁶ To counter the pitfall of establishing a historiographical analysis between the cases of Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century that is indemonstrable, the thesis will first of all demonstrate the historical connection between the two cases during this period.

The starting point for distilling a possible historiographical connection between the two cases is by first analysing the network of the most prominent French-Canadian nationalist historian Lionel Groulx, and its possible connections to Belgian historiography. Through the analysis of Groulx and his close network, it is possible to establish and highlight the role and influence of the Catholic University of Leuven in the education and formation of French-Canadian nationalists during this period, and, as such, constitutes an important historical connection between Quebec and Flanders during this period.

⁸⁶ Frédéric Boily, *La Pensée Nationaliste*, pp. 880-882.

It is only after having established a historical connection between Quebec and Flanders that it becomes possible to analyse how French-Canadian historians might have been influenced by Belgian historiography, and the Catholic University of Leuven in particular. It is at this point that the French-Canadian historian Joseph-Ernest Laferrière plays an important role. Laferrière's formation and education at the Catholic University of Leuven, resulting in the completion of a thesis, constitutes him as the mediating figure between the Flemish and Quebec historiography which subsequently legitimates the analysis of his archive. Only through an in-depth analysis of his notes, articles and published thesis does it become possible to illustrate how the Belgian historiographical context influenced Laferrière, and how, through his involvement in French-Canadian historiography and his connection to other French-Canadian historians, it is possible to establish an increasing influence of the Catholic University of Leuven on Quebec historiography during this period.⁸⁷

Having first established the French-Canadian connection to the Catholic University of Leuven, it is then crucial to indicate how Leuven played a role in the historical formation and education of Flemish nationalist historians during this period. In this sense, out of the prominence of the Catholic University of Leuven in the comparison, a number of Flemish nationalist historians arise that can be considered as the most suitable cases for comparison with the French-Canadian historians. What becomes clear then is that by constituting Leuven as the focal point for the historiographical connection between Quebec and Flanders during this period, it is possible to posit both regions as adhering to a shared historiographical tradition, and, in this sense, reduces the risk of a historiographical overreach. Only after having illustrated the shared tradition through the focality of the Catholic University of Leuven in both cases' historiography does it become possible to analyse and designate the importance of neo-Thomism in both Quebec and Flemish historiography.

Through an analysis of the published historical works and the private library of Groulx – so as to avoid Boily's pitfall – a number of neo-Thomists will be designated that were influential to both French-Canadian and Flemish nationalist historians and played an important role at the Catholic University of Leuven during this period. It is through an analysis of the writings of these neo-Thomists that three concepts are distilled and defined, which are then used as the general framework in which the historiographies of both Quebec and Flanders are analysed. In conclusion, the analysis for a shared historiographical connection between nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders thus leads to two crucial elements. First, it is concluded that there existed a shared historiographical tradition amongst historians in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century that centred around the Catholic University of Leuven, and, as such, the risk of a historiographical indemonstrable

⁸⁷ Laferrière's archive is situated in the Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec.

overreach between the two cases is avoided. Secondly, it is due to the focality of the Catholic University of Leuven in both cases that the importance of neo-Thomism is highlighted, and the neo-Thomist framework that is used to analyse and compare the historiographies of Quebec and Flanders is legitimated through the shared historiographical connection between the two cases. Only then does it become possible to conduct a historiographical analysis of the nationalist historians in both cases, which leads to the second crucial element in this methodology.

M.2. Historiographical Analysis: a concentric approach

A second issue that was raised in the historiography chapter was the risk of reducing a historiographical analysis to the analysis of one or two prominent historians, thus generalizing the ideas of one historian without taking into account the larger historiographical context. This problem is most clearly illustrated by Jean-Marie's Fecteau's critique of the historian Ronald Rudin's analysis of twentieth-century Quebec historiography. Fecteau argued that while Rudin strove to analyse the interplay between societal changes and historiography throughout the twentieth century, "in reality, this translates into an exploration of the thought and action of certain prominent historians in the light of the evolution of the overall historical community in Quebec."⁸⁸ Due to this reduction of his historiographical analysis to the work of certain prominent historians, Fecteau criticizes Rudin's methodology because, "despite the author's declared intentions, neither the societal context nor the historiographical reflection on the state of the historical profession occupies a prominent place in the book."⁸⁹

This risk of essentializing leads to a second issue that was raised by the historian Hayden White in a debate with his colleague Chris Lorenz on the nature of historical writing and historiographical analysis. White criticized Lorenz's approach to historical writing, pointing out that "my approach to you would not be to characterise, not to sum up, not to paraphrase what you said but to quote you."⁹⁰ Contrarily, White continues, "My approach to historical writing is this: not to sum up, not to give the biography of the author in order to explain his historiography. Rather look at, look at the historiography itself, look at its most superficial aspects, its most manifest aspects, what it says on the page, and do a grammatical, dictional and semantic analysis of what is said, not what you find logically implied by it or what was logically presupposed by it."⁹¹ White concludes his criticism by stating that "in fields like historiography, which are not scientific in any strict sense of the term, one needs a critical

⁸⁸ Jean-Marie Fecteau, 'Between Scientific Enquiry', pp. 644-645

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 645.

⁹⁰ Hayden White, 'On the Research and the Writing Phase of the Historian's Work', *Historiein*, 14 (2014), pp.72.

⁹¹ Ibid.

principle somewhat different from that obtaining in real sciences – by which I mean disciplines with experimental controls over their subjects.”⁹²

This thesis addresses these two methodological issues through three different elements. First, this thesis prioritizes the use of published historical works as the main source to analyse nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders. The reason for this is twofold. On the one hand, by emphasizing published historical works, it is possible to adhere to White’s admonition to look at the written texts themselves, and, per consequence, again reduce the risk of historiographical overreach by ascribing to a historian and his writing a certain logical consistency that is not demonstrable or apparent in the text itself, as has been illustrated by Boily’s methodology. On the other hand, due to the focus on published historical works, the public nature of historiography is stressed. Consequently, this makes it possible to analyse how the societal context – in particular the publishing and academic contexts – might have influenced the historical work, and can illustrate the different publishing and academic contexts between the two cases, and, as such, avoids the pitfall of Rudin’s methodology. Moreover, this thesis addresses White’s notion of taking a historical work at its most superficial level by incorporating a paratextual approach to the methodology, which in turn transcends White’s initial approach by not limiting the historiographical analysis to solely the written text, but also considering and analysing the paratextual elements that define the nature of the historical work, and by consequence the historiography in the two cases.

Secondly, the risk of essentializing a historiography to the life and writings of prominent historians is addressed through the use of a novel approach to historiographical analysis that takes into account the critiques of essentializing a historiography whilst simultaneously maintaining a nuanced emphasis on the prominent nationalist historians in the two cases.⁹³ The reason this thesis adheres to the analysis of prominent nationalist historians in both cases stems from the comparative approach. Out of the establishment of a shared historiographical connection, a limited number of nationalist historians arise that are considered most valid for comparison, and, by consequence, the comparison itself limits the number of historians that can be compared in the historiographical analysis. To avoid the risk however of reducing the analysis of nationalist historiography to the writings of one or two prominent historians, this thesis has devised a concentric historiographical analysis. This approach consists of two crucial elements.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ A very recent similar endeavour in the case of Groulx is Michel Bock, 'De La Pertinence Historiographique D'une Trajectoire Individuelle : Lionel Groulx, La Confédération Et Le Canada Français', *Canadian Historical Review*, 98 (2017), 297-320.

The first element is that it retains the emphasis on the prominent nationalist historians that, because of the comparison, are considered as most suitable due to their shared historiographical tradition. In this sense, prominent historians constitute the centre of analysis, and their published historical works are the principle primary sources that are used for analysis. Secondly, the thesis avoids the risk of essentializing a historiography by incorporating different concentric layers of historians into the analysis (See Appendix 1). Starting with the most affiliated historians – those that were part of the prominent historians' network – the analysis further expands where possible by including historians that, while not ideally suited for the comparison, can still be considered as relevant to the historiographical analysis, for example nationalist historians unaffiliated to the prominent historians that make reference to neo-Thomism in their work, such as Laferrière. Finally, the outer layer of the analysis consists of historians that are dissimilar to the prominent historian so as to illustrate the intricacies of the historians that are being analysed, and to show how the neo-Thomist concepts constituted a particular historiography in both cases. As outlined in Appendix 1, the analysis thus maintains an emphasis on the prominent nationalist historians in both regions during this period, but reduces the risk of essentializing the historiography by expanding the scope of analysis to different layers of affiliated and relevant historians, in this sense making it possible to illustrate the broader influence of the neo-Thomist concepts on the nationalist historiography in Flanders and Quebec during this period. It should be noted however, as a final admonition, that the different layers in the concentric approach do not constitute a rigid distinction between different historians during this period, but that this approach has been considered as an analytical tool that illustrates the influence of neo-Thomist concepts on nationalist historiography during this period, and the permeance of the concepts via different prominent historians into the general historiography.

The permeance of the neo-Thomist concepts in the two historiographies leads to a third and final element that is of importance to the methodology. White's characterization of the field of historiography as distinct from the exact sciences on the notion that it requires a different critical principle that is not based on experimental control is of crucial importance when analysing the influence of the neo-Thomist concepts on the nationalist historiography of the two cases. The consequence of this notion is that there is a risk in a historiographical analysis of superimposing a logical consistency in the concepts and notions that are used to analyse a historiography. White himself alluded to this element when, in his debate with Lorenz, he explained how "historical writing, especially in a narrative mode, cannot be understood by bringing to it criteria of scientific consistency, logical consistency and so forth."⁹⁴ This deficiency of logical consistency in the analysis of

⁹⁴ Hayden White, 'On the Research', pp. 71-74.

historiography poses an important issue for this thesis, as it indicates how a historiographical analysis can't be restricted to clearly defined concepts, which, in a scientific experimental manner, can be reproduced in different historiographical contexts. By consequence, the analysis of the influence and importance of neo-Thomist concepts on the nationalist historiographies in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century has to take into consideration this aspect of historiography, and take into account the notion of logical inconsistency with regards to concepts and notions used to conduct a historiographical analysis. This thesis addresses this issue through two elements. First, this thesis puts emphasis on the malleability of the different neo-Thomist concepts in the different historiographical contexts. By stressing that the concepts analysed and distilled from the neo-Thomist writings could be adapted and reformed in the two historiographical cases, this thesis underlines that a rigid definition of the different neo-Thomist concepts is not feasible in the analysis of nationalist historiography. Moreover, by illustrating the malleability of the concepts, it is possible to analyse and highlight how the different contexts could have contributed to a different application and adaptation of the different concepts, thereby contributing to the overall comparison between the two cases.

The danger however neglected in White's outline is that in posing the malleability of the different neo-Thomist concepts, thereby nuancing the idea of logical consistency, there is the risk of the neo-Thomist concepts – and historiographical analytical tools in general – losing their relevance and suitability in the analysis. The consequence of White denouncing the principle in the exact sciences of "experimental control" for a historiographical analysis is that there are no controlled parameters used to define and analyse a historiography in a specific historical context. It is thus crucial, by accepting this premise, to devise a set of control parameters that do not constitute an absolute principle – thus legitimating the idea of reproducibility of the concepts in different historical circumstances – but acknowledge the historicity of the different circumstances, whilst simultaneously striving to establish a framework that transcends the particularity of one specific historical circumstance. It is in this sense that the comparative method, as a second element, plays a crucial role. The comparative method in this sense has a double function. On the one hand, it compares the traditional definition of the neo-Thomist concepts with their application in the two cases, thereby illustrating how the two historiographies adhered or differed from the traditional definition, and thus showing the malleability of the concepts. On the other hand, the comparison between the two historiographies is allowed to transcend the emphasis on one specific control set – the historical circumstance – and thus retains the possibility to ascribe a generalizing and analytical principle to the neo-Thomist concepts, whilst simultaneously avoiding the pitfall of maintaining a rigid definition of

the concepts which is, in accordance with White's characterization of historiography, untenable and infeasible for the analysis.

In conclusion, what the two sections in this chapter have outlined is how this thesis can address some of the most important issues that have characterized the traditional historiographical analysis of the two cases. In particular, the emphasis and approach to the comparison, in which first and foremost a historical connection has to be demonstrated, allows for an in-depth comparison and analysis of nationalist historiography in both Quebec and Flanders, avoiding the traditional pitfalls. By devising a concentric historiographical analysis this thesis can, via its methodology, highlight how it is possible to address these issues whilst maintaining the core principles of the traditional historiographical analysis, and, in this sense, can be seen as an answer to some of the comments and critiques that have traditionally been raised against the traditional historiographical analysis.

Chapter I. An inextricable connection? The role of the Catholic University of Leuven in Quebec and Flanders.

This chapter will analyse the role and importance of the Catholic University of Leuven on the historical formation and education of historians in both Quebec and Flanders, thereby arguing that they were influenced by a shared historiographical tradition that was profoundly marked by Belgian Catholic historiography. It will first be argued that the Catholic University of Leuven played an influential role in the formation and education of historians in Quebec. By focusing on the network of the most prominent historian of Quebec during the first half of the twentieth century – Lionel Groulx – it will become apparent that the Catholic University of Leuven played an important role in the formation of a number of French-Canadians. It will be argued, secondly, that the specific teaching of history at the university – which comprised of a symbiosis of ecclesiastical history and the novel methodological innovations in the discipline – had a profound impact on French-Canadian historians. Using the French-Canadian historian Joseph-Ernest Laferrière as main example for analysis, it will be illustrated how the theoretical and methodological trappings of the discipline influenced French-Canadian historians, and

how Laferrière's thesis and theorems can be considered as ideal examples of the practice of French-Canadian historiography.

It will, thirdly, be argued that the ecclesiastical and methodological principles that were apparent in the French-Canadian historiography could also be traced back to a number of Flemish nationalist historians, further illustrating their shared adherence to the Belgian Catholic historiographical context. Focusing primarily on the prominent Flemish nationalist historians that had received their education at the Catholic University of Leuven, it will be argued that these historians had been influenced by the same historians and Catholic philosophers that had been influential in Quebec. In this sense, it will be concluded that historians in both Quebec and Flanders can be considered as part of a shared historiographical tradition and network in which the Catholic University of Leuven figured prominently, and which was marked by an emphasis on Catholic, ecclesiastical principles in conjunction with a methodological renewal in the historical discipline.

I.I. Groulx and the University of Leuven

In the autumn of 1907 the prominent French-Canadian nationalist historian Lionel Groulx explained to Émile Chartier – the future vice-rector of the University of Montreal – why he had chosen to attend courses at the University of Fribourg during the summer. In legitimating his preference for the University of Fribourg, Groulx disclosed to his friend that

The Arts Faculty in Fribourg is a hundred times better than the one in Leuven. It's a conclusion I reached following my interviews with the professors, of which many are formerly from Leuven, from the comparison of the two programs, from the examination of the methodology and my conversations with students that have frequented both universities.⁹⁵

Groulx's fixation on the University of Leuven [Louvain] was apparent throughout the early months of 1907, when the historian was contemplating his next destination following his sojourn in Rome. In February, he conveyed to Chartier how he was "considering trying my luck in Leuven" and concluded a couple months later that "[I] will probably pack my bags for Leuven."⁹⁶ So at first glance it comes as a surprise that Groulx ultimately preferred Fribourg over Leuven, considering it was Groulx's first choice during the first six months of 1907. Groulx however made his choice for Fribourg clear when he wrote to Joseph-Médard Émard, the bishop of Valleyfield, Quebec, that

After Paris, I was of course considering Leuven. But, even though Leuven is, as its multiple works show, a centre without equal for the sociological sciences, I have reason to believe that one does not find

⁹⁵ All translations throughout the thesis are mine. Giselle, Huot, Juliette Lalonde-Rémillard and Pierre Trépanier, *Lionel Groulx. Correspondance: 1894-1967. II: Un étudiant à l'école de l'Europe: 1906-1909* (Montreal: Fides, 1993), pp. 310. Pierre Trépanier, 'Groulx, Lionel', in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History*, ed. by Gerald Hallowell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 197; pp. 263.

satisfaction with regards to French literature [...] I have talked there [Fribourg] with former professors and students from Leuven, and they were unanimous in impartially warning me that even though a sojourn in Leuven is preferable to those who want to study sociology, Fribourg is infinitely preferred for the study of the classic languages, as for the French literature.⁹⁷

What is apparent from Groulx's description is his preference for French literature, and helps to explain why he ultimately chose to spend his summer at Fribourg. What is also clear in this and the previous statement is the inextricable connection Groulx envisioned between Leuven and Fribourg. By focusing on the professors and students who had studied at Leuven, and the comparison Groulx made between both programmes, it is beneficial to see his choice for Fribourg not as a rejection of Leuven. On the contrary, Fribourg and Leuven should be considered as part of a larger network, each with a different emphasis which ultimately influenced Groulx's choice. This connection becomes even more apparent when the French-Canadian explained to Émard how in Fribourg "they are neo-Scholastic, and from an even more orthodox school than the one in Leuven given that they found a way to retrace the Kantian infiltrations in Mgr. [Désiré] Mercier's work."⁹⁸

It's crucial to note that Désiré-Joseph Mercier, the future archbishop of Malines, was the holder of the Chair in Thomist Philosophy at Leuven, helped found the *Leo XIII Seminary* which housed international students, and was a pivotal figure in the founding of the neo-Thomist philosophy.⁹⁹ The description of both universities as part of the neo-scholastic tradition, in relation to Groulx's specific mention of Mercier thus illustrates how we should not consider Leuven as the antithesis to Fribourg, but as part of a wider network that attracted French-Canadian priests and researchers during the first decade of the twentieth century, because even though Groulx ultimately chose Fribourg over Leuven, there are numerous French-Canadians that did live and study at Leuven. The authors of Groulx's *Correspondance* – Giselle Huot, Juliette Lalonde-Rémillard and Pierre Trépanier – highlight this, explaining how "they ignore how many students went to Leuven. It is certain that the Belgian influences in Quebec did not slow down in 1908."¹⁰⁰ This comment by the editors of the correspondence of one of the most prominent nationalist historians in Quebec is an indication that Belgium – and the Catholic University of Leuven in particular – played an influential role in the formation and education of a number of French-Canadians that were part of Groulx's network.

In what follows, I will analyse the French-Canadians that were part of Groulx's correspondence and had spent time studying in Leuven during the first decades of the twentieth century. Based on

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 412-413.

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 413.

⁹⁹ See A. Simon, 'Mercier, Desiré-Joseph', in *Biographie Nationale: Tome Trentième*, ed. by lettres et beaux-arts Académie Royale des sciences (Brussels: Etablissements Emile Bruylant, 1958), pp. 575-95; Louis De Raeymaeker, *Het Seminarie Leo XIII Van 1892 Tot 1942* (Leuven: 1942), pp. 8-25

¹⁰⁰ Huot et al., *Correspondance*, pp. 499.

these six French-Canadians - abbé Joseph-Oscar Maurice, père Samuel Bellavance, Louis-Ubalde Mousseau, Émile Cloutier, Arthur Robert and Alfred Langlois – I will first argue that all six can be considered as part of the generation born in the 1860s and 70s that would play a vital role during the interwar period. Secondly, I will argue that the prevalence of Rome, and the connection to Fribourg in the sojourns of the French-Canadians illustrate that the Catholic University of Leuven should be considered as part of a Catholic network which was successful in attracting a significant amount of foreign Catholic students. Finally, I will argue that the analysis of the French-Canadians studying at the Catholic University of Leuven during this period illustrates how the university strove to combine the developments and methodological innovations in the different disciplines with the Catholic philosophy and principles that characterized the university. In this sense, the Catholic University of Leuven's teachings were marked by an attempt to converge the methodological, scientific premises with the Catholic philosophy and principles.

I.II. French-Canadian students at Leuven

I.II.I. Abbé Joseph-Oscar Maurice and the discipline of (Catholic) pedagogy

Abbé Joseph-Oscar Maurice, born June 30, 1877 in Chambly, Quebec, had followed his education to priesthood at the Grand Séminaire de Montréal and was ordained in 1903, after which he spent two years at the Collège Canadien in Rome studying theology (1904-1906).¹⁰¹ Following his time in Rome, Maurice would move to Paris to study literature at the Sorbonne, where he would obtain a degree in the subject in 1907. What is important to note is that Maurice, according to the *Dictionnaire du Clergé Canadien-Français*, "in the meantime spent a couple of months studying Belgian pedagogical methods at Leuven, and a number of months studying the social sciences in Leuven and Paris (1907)."¹⁰² The emphasis on pedagogical methods is of particular interest, as Maurice would hold the chair for Pedagogy at the University of Montreal during the interwar period and had his teachings on pedagogy published in six extensive volumes.¹⁰³

Considering the importance of pedagogy in Maurice's studies and career, it is beneficial to further explore what exactly the discipline of pedagogy in this period entailed, and what the role of Leuven was. Pedagogy in Belgium during the second half of the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth century had been heavily influenced by German scholars, in particular Otto Willmann (1839-

¹⁰¹ Jean-Baptiste Arthur Allaire, *Dictionnaire Biographique Du Clergé Canadien-Français. Tome Troisième. Deuxième Supplément* (Montreal: Imprimerie de l'École catholique des sourds-muets, 1910), pp. 87-88.

¹⁰² Ibid., pp. 88.

¹⁰³ Procure des missions des sœurs de Sainte-Anne, *Précis d'histoire littéraire: littérature canadienne-française* (Lachine, 1928), pp. 234-235. See for example Joseph-Oscar Maurice, *Causeries Pédagogiques* (Montreal: Imprimerie de Lamirande, 1943).

1920).¹⁰⁴ The importance of Willmann, according to one of the leading Belgian Catholic pedagogues of the interwar period, Frans de Hovre, was twofold. First of all, de Hovre emphasised how Willmann stressed that “the system of nurturing and education needs to be elaborated, not only from the point of view of assuring and ennobling the individual life, but also from the viewpoint of maintaining and perpetuating the life of the social organism. It’s the phenomena of the collective life which can’t be understood without using sociology.”¹⁰⁵ Secondly, relating to this sociological interpretation was the importance of history and the historical perspective. De Hovre explained how “one can’t fully comprehend the nature of the constitutive elements of education and culture without understanding history,” concluding that “the social and historical point of view converge; social pedagogy can’t further elaborate without using the historical pedagogy.”¹⁰⁶

What is instrumental to highlight in Willmann’s and De Hovre’s characterization of pedagogy is the convergence of history, social studies and pedagogy. While only briefly mentioned in this section, this is an important feature to highlight, as it underlines the pedagogical nature that was ascribed to history, and will be further analysed with regards to Groulx’s political ideology in Chapter IV, and can be seen as a first indication of the larger historiographical practice in Quebec in which historians ascribed an explicitly pedagogical element to the historical discipline which subsequently helped to influence their political ideology and actions.

I.II.II. Père Samuel Bellavance and the teachings of theology

Père Samuel Bellavance was born on September 7, 1872 in Saint-Fabien in the municipality of Rimouski and joined the Jesuit congregation in Sault-au-Récollet on August 9, 1892 before being ordained in 1907.¹⁰⁷ Following his ordination, the *Dictionnaire* indicates that Bellavance was “a student in theology in Montreal, Leuven, Paris and in England (1907-1911).”¹⁰⁸ This can be further validated by consulting the *Catalogus Provinciae Canadensis* from the Jesuit Order, and by analysing his correspondence with Groulx. Out of these sources we can conclude that Bellavance was in Leuven from 1908 till 1910, and

¹⁰⁴ Robert Halleux, Jan Vandersmissen, André Despy-Meyer, and Geert Vanpaemel, *Geschiedenis Van De Wetenschappen in België 1815 – 2000* (Brussels: Dexia Bank, 2001), pp. 332.

¹⁰⁵ Frans De Hovre, 'L'œuvre D'otto Willmann (1839-1920)', *Revue néo-scolastique*, 22 (1920), pp. 400.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Prior to his ordination Bellavance had already played an active role amongst French Canadian Catholics, as he was heavily involved (in accordance with Groulx) in the creation of the *Association catholique de la jeunesse canadienne-française*. See Jean-Philippe Warren, 'La Découverte De La « Question Sociale »', *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 55 (2002), pp. 545-557; Michael Behiels, 'L'association Catholique De La Jeunesse Canadienne-Française and the Quest for a Moral Regeneration, 1903-1914', *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 13 (1978), pp. 27-41.

¹⁰⁸ Jean-Baptiste Arthur Allaire, *Dictionnaire Biographique. Tome Sixième* (Montreal: Imprimerie de l'École catholique des sourds-muets, 1910), pp. 85.

held residence with the Jesuits in Leuven at the Rue de Récollet 11.¹⁰⁹ Bellavance's choice as a Jesuit to hold residence in Belgium is important to note, as the presence of this congregation in Belgium was very marked.¹¹⁰ If we compare for example the total number of Jesuits in Belgium in 1910 with its Germanic counterparts this becomes very clear. Belgium, with a total of 1178 ordained Jesuits, outnumbers the Netherlands (547), Austro-Hungary (752) and even Germany (1138).¹¹¹ Moreover, this marked presence of Jesuits in Belgium can help to explain the relevance of theology at the Catholic University of Leuven, and, more importantly, can help to highlight briefly the symbiosis of the Catholic principles and historical methodology that underlined the teaching of history at the Catholic University of Leuven during this period.

It is important to note that the faculty of theology at Leuven, in accordance with its German counterparts, was fully integrated in the university. What this meant was that next to theology students at Leuven were introduced to other academic disciplines during their time at the university, most importantly the study of (biblical) history.¹¹² Starting with the introduction of critical Bible Studies by the German priest and historian Bernard Jungmann during the second half of the nineteenth century, history would begin to play a crucial role in the teachings of theology in 1896 when the historian Alfred Cauchie, who had succeeded Jungmann the year before, introduced a set of *Conférences historiques* at the Faculty of Theology.¹¹³ These conferences, as we will highlight more in-depth later, were crucial for the development of the historical discipline at the Catholic University of Leuven, as it entailed a symbiosis of the traditional ecclesiastical themes with the methodological innovations that were instrumental to the historical discipline during this period. Cauchie himself exemplifies this symbiosis, as he explained how the student was required on the one hand to obtain "a *general knowledge* of ecclesiastical history ", indicating that it was "not only an addition to the theological and canonical studies, but indispensable to whomever wants to conduct a fruitful personal research of history"¹¹⁴ On the other hand, the historian emphasised "the knowledge of the methodological principles" – with particular attention to "the auxiliary sciences, heuristics, critique

¹⁰⁹ [Eduard Lecompte], *Catalogus Provinciae Canadensis. Societas Jesu, Inneunte anno MCMVIII* (Marianopolis: 1909), pp. 44.

¹¹⁰ Belgium for example had thirteen Jesuit colleges in the first decades of the twentieth century, compared to three in Ireland and the Netherlands and four in England, see Thomas Campbell, *The Jesuits, 1534-1921, a History of the Society of Jesus from Its Foundation to the Present Time* (Auckland: Floating Press, 2014), pp. 773-774.

¹¹¹ [Eduard Lecompte], *Catalogus Provinciae Canadensis. Societas Jesu, Inneunte anno MCMX* (Marianopolis: 1910), pp. 53.

¹¹² Alfred Cauchie, 'The teaching of History at Louvain', *The Catholic University Bulletin* 13 (1907), pp.518.

¹¹³ [Alfred Cauchie], *Le Séminaire Historique de Louvain* (Leuven: Charles Peeters), pp. 10-11; Philip Hughes, 'Miscellany: History Teaching at Louvain', *The Catholic Historical Review* 7 (1921), pp. 202-203.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

and historical reconstruction”.¹¹⁵ Moreover, emphasis was put on the student’s own contribution to the field of ecclesiastical history, as Cauchie explained that the goal of the conferences was for students to “contribute to the progress of ecclesiastical history via original productions.”¹¹⁶

In conclusion, what is crucial to highlight at this point – considering this emphasis on the methodological principles in the historical discipline will be further analysed later in this Chapter and in Chapter III – is the notion that theology and history were closely intertwined in the teachings at the Catholic University of Leuven. In this sense, Cauchie’s emphasis on the necessity for students in theology to understand the methodological innovations in the historical discipline – with the submission of a thesis the prime example – is a clear indication of how the Catholic University of Leuven strove to combine the scientific nature of the different disciplines with Catholicism, a feature which, as we will see in Chapter II, can be considered as a result of the neo-Thomist philosophy.

I.II.III. Social Sciences: Louis-Ubalde Mousseau, Émile Cloutier and Arthur Robert

It is crucial to highlight the important role the social sciences played at the Catholic University of Leuven when assessing the presence of French-Canadians at Leuven. This is clear by the fact that three out of the seven correspondents discussed in this part obtained a licentiate in the social sciences at Leuven, and that Groulx himself referred to Leuven as “a centre without equal for the sociological sciences”, a notion that has also been taken over by the historian Yvan Lamonde, who indicates that it was “primarily the social question that during the first third of the twentieth century established the most durable Quebec observation of Belgium.”¹¹⁷ Consequently, it is instrumental to understand the role the social sciences played at the Catholic University of Leuven, and assess, based on an analysis of the origins and organisation of the social science department, how the Catholic University of Leuven envisioned the education of the social sciences and how it had an influence on these three French-Canadians, who will firstly be described.

I.II.III.I. Bios

Born August 25, 1877 in Saint-Polycarpe, Quebec, Louis-Ubalde Mousseau was ordained as a priest in 1900. After four years as the secretary of the diocese of Valleyfield, Mousseau would move to Rome to study theology (1904-1906), and would thereafter move to Leuven where he would study social and political science, ultimately obtaining a licentiate in 1907. After his studies in Leuven Mousseau

¹¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 17.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 18.

¹¹⁷ Yvan Lamonde, 'La Trame Des Relations Entre La Belgique Et Le Québec (1830-1940): La Primauté De La Question Sociale', in *La Question Sociale En Belgique Et Au Canada: Xixe-Xxe Siècles*, ed. by Ginette Kurgan-van Hentenryk (Brussels: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1988), pp. 180.

would return to Quebec to become professor in philosophy at the Valleyfield College from 1907-1927.¹¹⁸

Émile Cloutier, born in Saint-Prospère de Champlain on December 19, 1875, had followed theology at the Grand Seminary of Quebec before being ordained in 1901. Having been a professor in rhetoric at the seminary of Trois-Rivières, Cloutier would move to the Collège Canadien in Rome, where he would ultimately obtain a diploma in canonical law in 1907.¹¹⁹ Cloutier would subsequently move to Leuven where he would study social and political science and obtain his licentiate in 1908.¹²⁰ What is important to note is that after his studies in Leuven Cloutier would continue to work and publish in the social sciences, as is illustrated for example by his published works *Égoïsme & sens social* and *Syndicats patronaux*, and via his involvement in the conferences of the *Semaine sociale du Canada*, which had an influential role in the development of the social sciences in Quebec during the interwar period.¹²¹ What Émile Cloutier's life and career highlight is twofold. On the one hand, his sojourn in Europe indicates the position of the Catholic University of Leuven in a Catholic network, with Rome as its epicentre. On the other hand, Cloutier's continued expertise in the social sciences indicates the influence and importance the Catholic University of Leuven had in this network, and, more importantly, the lasting effect the university had on the career and formation of French-Canadians studying in Leuven.

The most illustrative example of the lasting influence of the Catholic University of Leuven is the figure of abbé Joseph-Arthur Robert. Born October 22, 1876 in Beauport, Quebec, Robert was ordained in 1902, after which he took up a position at the University of Quebec for three years.¹²² In 1905 Robert would first move to Italy, studying in Rome, before moving to Leuven in 1906, obtaining his licentiate in the same year as Mousseau.¹²³ It is after his studies at Leuven that Robert would become of crucial importance to the development of the social sciences in Quebec, particularly in his role in the origin of the École des Sciences Sociales at the University of Laval. Not only did he play a vital role in its foundation, Robert would be the first director of the School, and would help lay the groundwork for the successive director, Georges-Henri Lévesque, who is considered as one of the

¹¹⁸ Jean-Baptiste Arthur Allaire, *Dictionnaire Biographique. Les Contemporains* (Montreal: Imprimerie de l'École catholique des sourds-muets, 1908), pp. 441.

¹¹⁹ Jean-Baptiste Arthur Allaire, *Dictionnaire Biographique. Tome Troisième, Deuxième Supplément* (Montreal: Imprimerie de l'École catholique des sourds-muets, 1910), pp. 40.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ For more on the *Semaine*, see Jean-Philippe Warren, *L'engagement Sociologique. La Tradition Sociologique Du Québec Francophone (1886-1955)* (Montreal: Boréal, 2003), pp. 63-66.

¹²² Jean-Baptiste Arthur Allaire, *Dictionnaire Biographique. Tome Troisième, Quatrième Supplément* (Montreal: Imprimerie de l'École catholique des sourds-muets, 1910), pp. 82.

¹²³ Ibid.

most important figures in the development of the social sciences in Quebec during the twentieth century.¹²⁴ Moreover, it is interesting to note Lévesque was also influenced by the Belgian context, mentioning in his autobiography that “If you ignore them (my experiences in Belgium), it is impossible to understand the rest of my life,” highlighting once more, as have the other examples in this section, the relevance of the social sciences as taught at the Catholic University of Leuven for Quebec.¹²⁵

I.II.III.II. Structure of School of Social and Political Science Leuven

Because of the prevalence of the study of the social sciences amongst Groulx’ correspondents, it is beneficial to take a closer look at the origins and structure of the School of Social and Political Science in Leuven, as it can give us a better understanding of what the social sciences at the university entailed, and how the School can be considered as an illustrative example of the international nature of the Catholic University of Leuven during this period. The School was a relative new and young department during the first decades of the twentieth century, as it was founded in 1892.¹²⁶ During this initial period, two figures played a fundamental role: Jules Van den Heuvel and Victor Brants.¹²⁷ What is crucial to emphasize is that Brants, in addition to being a sociologist and economist, was also a historian, as is apparent for example from his publication *L’autonomie internationale de la Belgique sous les archiducs Albert et Isabelle (1598-1621)* in 1901.¹²⁸ This historical background played an influential role in the foundation of the School and its subsequent course outline. The general Catholic congress in Malines in 1892 followed the suggestions of Albert Nyssens, spokesperson for Van den Heuvel at the congress, in the creation of the School, concluding that

Considering it is conventional – particularly during our own epoch – to encourage young Catholics to undertake a rigorous study of political and economic sciences, the Assembly expresses its wish that the Catholic University of Leuven organises an education that, from the point of view of history and comparative legislation, focuses specifically on public law and economy.¹²⁹

Nyssens’ suggestion is remarkable, as it highlights two important elements. On the one hand, the emphasis on the historical perspective indicates a growing relevance of the historical discipline at the

¹²⁴ Yvan Lamonde, 'La Trame Des Relations', pp. 175.

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp. 173.

¹²⁶ Emmanuel Gerard, *Sociale Wetenschappen Aan De Katholieke Universiteit Te Leuven 1892 – 1992* (Leuven: Politica, 1992), pp. 13-22.

¹²⁷ Ibid., pp. 11.

¹²⁸ Charles Terlinden, 'Brants, Victor', in *Biographie Nationale, Tome 30* (Brussels: Établissements Émile Bruylant, 1958), pp. 210.

¹²⁹ “Considérant qu’il convient tout particulièrement à notre époque de mettre les jeunes gens catholiques à même de faire une étude approfondie des sciences politiques et économiques, l’Assemblée émet le vœu qu’il soit organisée à l’Université catholique de Louvain un enseignement ayant spécialement pour objet l’étude au point de vue de l’histoire et de la législation comparée, des principales branches du droit public et de l’économie.” Gerard, Emmanuel, *Sociale wetenschappen*, pp. 15.

Catholic University of Leuven, as will be further indicated by the analysis of the historian Laferrière. On the other hand, Nyssens' comment on the convention to encourage Catholic students to enrol in the economic and political sciences highlights the emphasis on the symbiosis of the sciences and Catholicism that has been apparent from this section which, as we will see later, can be accredited to the prominence of the neo-Thomist philosophy at the university.

To further illustrate the convergence of the political, social, and historical sciences, and to highlight the transnational nature of the Catholic University of Leuven during this period, it is beneficial to look at the structure, student numbers and course programme of the School. The School followed the traditional university structure in Belgium during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which meant that there were three different grades: candidature, licentiate and doctorate. Because the School was only recently founded, it was impossible throughout these decades to organize and plan the programme for all three grades, which meant that only the licentiate programme – which was entirely novel – was organised by the School.¹³⁰ The licentiate, which all three French-Canadians obtained, was spread over two years with one exam period and consisted initially of nineteen courses of which the student had to choose nine in order to obtain his degree. Moreover, after 1898 the student was required to take one of three seminary sessions, an element, as we will see later, that was also required for obtaining a degree in history, indicating the methodological transformations that occurred at the university since the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

If we take for example the courses taught during the year 1907-1908, it becomes clear that the emphasis is on political and social themes, with a particular focus on comparative cases. There is however a clear connection to the historical discipline – thereby illustrating the convergence of the different sciences – through the figures of Brants and Charles Terlinden, who had been appointed at the School from 1907 and who from 1918 until 1952 held the chair of modern and contemporary history at the university.¹³¹ Finally, because the School was relatively new, the number of students and graduates at the School were low. If we take for example the year 1907, the year in which both Mousseau and Robert graduated from the School, we can assess that there were only six people that obtained a licentiate in social and political science that year (See Appendix 3). Even considering the relative low number of students that were enrolled at the university – in the year 1898-1899 for example there was a total of 1891 students – this is still a low number of graduates.¹³² However, what is instrumental to highlight is the international presence of the students enrolled in the programme,

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 22.

¹³¹ Henri Haag, 'Nécrologie: Le Vicomte Charles Terlinden (1878-1972)', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 50 (1972), pp. 1061-69.

¹³² *L'Université de Louvain: coup d'oeil sur son histoire et ses institutions, 1425-1900* (Brussels: Imprimerie Charles Bulens, 1900), pp. 192.

with the academic year of 1907 a clear indication of the international nature of the Catholic University of Leuven during this period. Moreover, the French-Canadians enrolled at the Catholic University of Leuven indicate that the university was part of a predominantly Catholic network in which both Rome and Leuven had an important role and illustrate how French-Canadian Catholics were able to formally educate and train themselves in Europe during this period.

In conclusion, the analysis of the three French-Canadians and the structure and courses of the School of Political and Social Science at Leuven has illustrated two crucial elements. First, the analysis has shown that the teaching of social and political science was marked by a convergence of different scientific disciplines – including history. Professors such as Brants and Terlinden were trained in a number of different scientific disciplines, further underscoring the symbiosis of Catholicism and scientific methodology that had clearly influenced the university. Secondly, the presence of the three French-Canadian students at the School of Social and Political Science indicates the international nature of the Catholic University of Leuven. The clear presence of international, Catholic students at the university during this period illustrates how we have to consider the Catholic University of Leuven as part of a Catholic network that was successful in educating French-Canadian students who would subsequently play an influential role in Quebec. The question that now remains is how the clear influence of the Catholic University of Leuven could have influenced the historiographical theory and practice in Quebec during this period.

I.II.IV. The Historian Joseph-Alfred Langlois

Joseph-Alfred Langlois is the one person out of Groulx's network that was enrolled in history at the Catholic University of Leuven. Born September 4, 1876, Langlois would be ordained in 1902, after which he took up positions as professor of philosophy at the Collège de Levis (1902-1903) and as professor of theology at the Grand Seminary in Quebec (1903-1906). Following these years, Langlois would move to Europe where he would first study philosophy at the Gregorian university in Rome, after which he would move to Leuven where he would stay at the *Leo XII Seminary* and take up classes in ecclesiastical history at the university (1907-1908). Following his studies, Langlois would become a professor in theology at the University of Laval, and would ultimately become bishop of Valleyfield from 1926 until his death in 1966, illustrating once more how the French-Canadian Catholics that would attend Leuven during the early decades of the twentieth century would take up important

positions in society throughout their life, stressing the inherently Catholic connection between Quebec and Leuven during this period.¹³³

Langlois's preference for ecclesiastical history is again an illustration of the emphasis at the Catholic University of Leuven on ecclesiastical history, in conjunction with the methodological innovations in the historical discipline during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This was clearly exemplified by the creation of the *Séminaire historique* in 1896. The *Séminaire*, led at that time by the renowned Belgian Catholic historian Alfred Cauchie, strove to combine the traditional expertise of ecclesiastical history with the methodological innovations in the discipline, and constitutes a crucial element in the analysis of the shared historiographical tradition between historians in Flanders and Quebec.¹³⁴ However, in order to get a full grasp of the *Séminaire* and the teachings of history on French-Canadian students, I will focus on another French-Canadian, Joseph-Ernest Laferrière, for the following reasons. First of all, Langlois, in comparison with Laferrière, only spent one year at the *Séminaire*, compared to Laferrière's three, and can thus be considered as a more illustrative example to analyse the influence of the Belgian Catholic historiographical context. Secondly, there is the practical archival side to preferring Laferrière over Langlois. Laferrière's archive has a large section dedicated to his time in Leuven, including course notes, handbooks and letters. This allows us to get a clear sense of not only Laferrière's time in Leuven, but more importantly the teachings and practices that were common in the history department and at the *Séminaire*. Finally, and in accordance with the previous point, the difference between Langlois and Laferrière is the latter's thesis written and submitted at the Catholic University of Leuven.¹³⁵ By being able to analyse this historical work it is possible to discern clearly the Belgian influences on the French-Canadian historian, allowing us to expand the scope of analysis that is also comprised of Langlois and other French-Canadian (nationalist) historians.

I.III. The Flemish-French-Canadian mediator: Joseph-Ernest Laferrière

Joseph-Ernest Laferrière spent four years at Leuven studying history at the *Séminaire historique* and concluded his education at Leuven with a novel thesis and a degree in historical and moral sciences. In this sense, Laferrière can be considered as the perfect example for characterizing and analysing all French-Canadian students at Leuven during this period, and will serve as the main point of reference

¹³³ Jean-Baptiste Arthur Allaire, *Dictionnaire Biographique. Compléments* (Montreal: Imprimerie de la Croix, 1928), pp. 84-85. His attendance can be confirmed via Louis de Raeymaeker, *Het Seminarie Leo XIII van 1892 tot 1942*, pp. 113.

¹³⁴ Geneviève Warland, and Matthias Middell, "'Pirenne and Co'". The Internationalization of Belgian Historical Science, 1880s-1920s', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 90 (2012), pp. 1229-1232; Alfred Cauchie, *Le Séminaire Historique De Louvain*, pp. 15.

¹³⁵ Jean-Baptiste Arthur Allaire, *Dictionnaire Biographique. Tome Troisième, Sixième Supplément* (Montreal: Imprimerie de l'École catholique des sourds-muets, 1910), pp. 42.

when comparing Flemish and French-Canadian historians. It will become apparent that Laferrière can be considered as a prime example to highlight the two major arguments made – the international nature of the Catholic University of Leuven and the symbiosis of ecclesiastical history with the methodological innovations. Moreover, this section will highlight how, in addition to his adherence to the methodological innovations, Laferrière can be considered as a typical example of the French-Canadian historiographical practices and interpretations of the first half of the twentieth century.

I.III.I. Bio

Joseph-Ernest Laferrière, son of Francois-Xavier Laferrière and Georgina Gervais, was born in Berthierville on April 10, 1874. Following his study in theology in Saint-Hyacinthe, Laferrière would be ordained by Mgr. Brunault on September 23, 1900.¹³⁶ After having spent seven years at the Seminary in Saint-Hyacinthe, Laferrière would travel to Europe. Similar to the other French-Canadian students at that time, Laferrière would first move to Rome, where he would ultimately obtain a degree in philosophy at the Université de la Propagande (1907-1909).¹³⁷ After a short period in Paris, Laferrière would move to Leuven where he would ultimately become a doctor in the historical and moral sciences in 1912.¹³⁸ The zenith of Laferrière's time and studies in Leuven was his original thesis on ecclesiastical history, *Étude sur Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, abbé de Saint-Ours de Cyran, 1581-1643* which will be further analysed in-depth later.

Following his studies in Leuven, Laferrière would travel across Europe for a short period before returning to Saint-Hyacinthe. Similar to the other French-Canadian students visiting Leuven during this period, Laferrière would continue to be involved in French-Canadian society, as is clear for example from his collaboration to the *Revue dominicaine* and his importance in the establishment of the Benedictine Abbey Saint-Benoît-du-Lac in Quebec.¹³⁹ Next to these activities, Laferrière would return to the Seminary in Saint-Hyacinthe where he would teach until his death in 1936. This brief overview of Laferrière's life indicates that – similar to the other French-Canadians – the characteristics that had been discussed in the previous section also apply to the French-Canadian historian, and as such can be considered as part of the larger group of French-Canadians that had attended or were enrolled in the Catholic University of Leuven during this period.

¹³⁶ Jean-Baptiste Arthur Allaire, *Dictionnaire Biographique. Tome Sixième*, pp. 336.

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp. 336-337.

¹³⁸ These dates and programme of study can be confirmed by Laferrière's enrolment papers for the University, which can be dated back to November 4, 1909 and clearly state his pursuit of a "License et doctorat en sciences morales et historiques", see Archival Record. (Dossier 87-88)

¹³⁹ Correspondance entre l'abbé Laferrière et les Bénédictins de St-Benoit-du-Lac, Fonds Abbe Joseph-Ernest Laferrière, CH012, Box 2, Folder CH012/000/000/042, Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe, Saint-Hyacinthe, Canada.

I.III.II. *Séminaire historique* at the University of Leuven

The teaching of history at the University of Leuven had known its origins in accordance with the Faculties of Theology and Philosophy and, as seen before, the priest and historian Bernard Jungmann played an important role in the foundation and structure of the teachings of (ecclesiastical) history at the university during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁰ However, Jungmann's successor, the historian Alfred Cauchie, explained in an article addressed to an American audience, that "until the law of 1890, the teaching of history in these two faculties was essentially theoretical in character."¹⁴¹ The law of April 10, 1890, which formally established the degree of *docteur en sciences morales et historiques*, can to a certain degree be considered as a caesura in the organization of history at the university, and constitutes an important element in describing the institutional context in which Laferrière received his education.¹⁴² It is therefore beneficial to first address the traditional teachings of history at the University and analyse how the law of 1890 may have altered the traditional teachings, and how the changes contributed to the symbiosis of ecclesiastical history and historical methodology that would subsequently influence Laferrière.

I.III.II.I. *The teaching of history during the nineteenth century and the law of 1890*

The teaching of history at the Catholic University of Leuven during the nineteenth century was part of both the Faculty of Theology and the Faculty of Philosophy and, as Cauchie explained, "was under no circumstance looked upon as a special study, not even for those who might become professors of church history in a seminary, or who might have a disposition for personal research."¹⁴³ However, despite this limited role at both faculties, there had been a number of historians that would have an influence on the way history had been taught and envisioned at the university, particularly Jean (Charles) Moeller and the aforementioned Bernard Jungmann. Jungmann, as illustrated earlier, had played a pivotal role in the teachings of ecclesiastical history at the Catholic University of Leuven via his role in introducing a new set of practical courses and teachings – he created the course of *patrology* (patristics) or study of the Church fathers for example.¹⁴⁴ Similar to Jungmann, Moeller can be considered as a precursor to the developments that would be officially recognized in the law of 1890 – i.e. a focus on historical methodology and an expertise in (medieval) Church history. Most

¹⁴⁰ See note 18.

¹⁴¹ Alfred Cauchie, 'The teaching of History at Louvain', pp. 518.

¹⁴² Hendrik Deelstra, 'Achtergrond Van De Wetten Van 1890-1891 En De Invloed Op Het Natuurwetenschappelijk Onderwijs in België', *Gewina: Tijdschrift voor de geschiedenis der Geneeskunde, Natuurwetenschappen, Wiskunde en Techniek*, 16 (1993), pp. 187-91.

¹⁴³ Alfred Cauchie, 'The teaching of History at Louvain', pp. 518.

¹⁴⁴ J.P. Kirsch, 'Jungmann, Bernard', in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. For more on patristics in Belgium during this period, and particularly at the Catholic University of Leuven, see Ward De Pril, and Johan Leemans, 'Patristics in Belgium around 1911: Universities and Beyond', *Journal of Ancient Christianity*, 15 (2011), pp. 140-62.

noteworthy in Moeller's case is his *Traité des études historiques*, a course on historical methodology published by his son Charles Moeller in 1887.¹⁴⁵ In conclusion, prior to the law of 1890 which formally recognized a doctorate in historical and moral sciences, and which consolidated the groundwork for a more practical approach to the historical discipline, there were already professors and courses in place that indicate that the law of 1890 did not entail an entire new interpretation of the historical discipline. On the contrary, the law should be considered as the official recognition of a process that had already been taken place at the university during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The law of 1890 however did consolidate certain practices and conventions that are of relevance when analysing Laferrière. First, the law officially recognized the historical discipline as an autonomous discipline with the possibility to obtain a doctorate in history.¹⁴⁶ The result of this is twofold. On the one hand, it allowed the historical discipline to be dissociated from philosophy and theology, and be considered, in line with Cauchie's remarks, as the object of special study. On the other hand, the law led to a greater homogenization amongst professors who themselves benefitted from the changing context. Alfred Cauchie for example, who was pivotal at the *Séminaire* during the time Laferrière attended, was amongst the first students that obtained a doctorate in 1890, and wrote a thesis entitled *La querelle des investitures dans les diocèses de Liège et de Cambrai*.¹⁴⁷ These two elements combined illustrate how the law of 1890 provided the historical discipline with a greater autonomy which benefitted both students and professors, who could focus solely on the practices and methodologies of the historical discipline.

This is, secondly, a crucial factor in assessing the importance of the 1890 law: the combination of the theoretical history courses with a practical approach, particularly exemplified by the demand to write an original thesis. Cauchie would again play a pivotal role in formalizing this practical outlook at the *Séminaire*. As indicated earlier, the Belgian Catholic historian would introduce a set of *Conférences historiques* after succeeding Jungmann which were aimed to "allow the students to enhance their knowledge and to become aware of the value of works on ecclesiastical history."¹⁴⁸ Next to these conferences, Jungmann had already introduced a set of *exercices critiques* in 1889 which were aimed at preparing the student to write a thesis. Lastly, the increased practical outlook of the teaching of history can be illustrated by a greater emphasis on the importance of the auxiliary sciences in the

¹⁴⁵ [s.n.], *Université catholique de Louvain (1834-1900): Bibliographie*, Leuven (Peeters, 1900), pp. 63-65.

¹⁴⁶ Erik Aerts, and Lieve De Mecheleer, "'Le César Des Archives': Archivistiek En Historiografie in De Eeuw Van Gachard", *Bibliotheek- & Archiefgids*, 79 (2003), pp. 29.

¹⁴⁷ [s.n.], *Université catholique de Louvain (1834-1900)*, pp. 6; Guérard, Louis, "*La querelle des investitures dans les diocèses de Liège et de Cambrai* [note bibliographique]", *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 14 (1894): 261-264.

¹⁴⁸ [Alfred Cauchie], *Le Séminaire Historique de Louvain*, 18.

historical discipline.¹⁴⁹ In line with the overall process, a greater attention to the auxiliary sciences had already emerged before the law of 1890, as indicated for example by professor Edmund Reusens who had introduced courses on palaeography, diplomacy and chronology in 1881.¹⁵⁰ This convergence of the practical courses and auxiliary sciences, and the role the law of 1890 played are clearly described by Cauchie when he commented how

the practical courses in history find a great support in the auxiliary sciences. This shows clearly that, by specializing the doctorates, the law of 1890 has not merely infused into each a new activity, but has also given them an opportunity for strengthening them by mutual co-operation. No wonder then that the results are so abundant and the success is so complete.¹⁵¹

The consequence of the law of 1890 was a rise in the number of dissertations about a historical subject that were published in both the Faculty of Philosophy and Theology, indicating Cauchie's earlier remarks that the law above else contributed to students considering history as the object of special study. The most striking result however, according to Cauchie, was the influence it had on the teachings of ecclesiastical history at Leuven. Describing religious history at the faculty of Theology as the "greatest characteristic" of the teaching of history at the university, Cauchie saw the creation of the *Séminaire historique* during the last decade of the nineteenth century as the "most considerable innovation".¹⁵² It is therefore instrumental to assess Cauchie's remarks and analyse the structure of this *Séminaire*, and what its relevance meant for Laferrière.

I.III.II.II. Organization of the Séminaire

The *Séminaire historique* was officially founded in 1896, uniting the three different sections scattered across the Faculties of Theology and Philosophy. Two of the three sections were situated in the Faculty of Theology and comprised of the earlier mentioned *exercices critiques* and *conférences historiques*. The last section was, as Cauchie explained, "a practical course added to my *lectures on medieval institutions*" and was thus part of the history courses taught at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters.¹⁵³ Based on the three different sections we can immediately assess the symbiosis between the Catholic

¹⁴⁹ See Jo Tollebeek, 'Historical Writing in the Low Countries', in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing. Volume 4: 1800-1945*, ed. by Stuart Macintyre and Juan Maiguashca (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 283-302; Leen Dorsman, 'De Nieuwe Eruditie: Het Ontstaan Van Een Historisch Bedrijf', in *De Palimpsest: Geschiedschrijving in De Nederlanden 1500-2000*, ed. by Jo Tollebeek, Tom Verschaffel and Leonard Wessels (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2002), pp. 168-175; Georg Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), pp. 23-30.

¹⁵⁰ Jacques Lavalleye, 'Reusens, Edmund', in *Biographie Nationale, Tome 31* (Brussels: Établissements Émile Bruylant, 1961), pp. 624.

¹⁵¹ Alfred Cauchie, 'The teaching of History at Louvain', pp. 535.

¹⁵² Ibid., pp. 539.

¹⁵³ Ibid., pp. 540.

and medieval themes with the renewed practical norms of the historical discipline. This is clear for example in Cauchie's description of the first of the three goals set out by the *Séminaire*, stating that "a general knowledge of ecclesiastical history" as first prerequisite was "not only an addition to the theological and canonical studies, but indispensable to whomever wants to conduct a fruitful personal research of history."¹⁵⁴ Next to this general knowledge, the symbiosis is again taken up in the second goal, which was for students to acquire "knowledge of the methodological principles" which was formalized in 1895 by the course *Introduction à l'histoire ecclésiastique* taught by Cauchie himself. The goal of this course was "to teach, using ample examples, the methodological principles from the viewpoint of religious history." Moreover, the methodological aspect of ecclesiastical history was emphasised in the organisation of the course, which focused in particular on "the auxiliary sciences, heuristics, critique and historical reconstruction."¹⁵⁵ Lastly, these two elements are combined in what Cauchie deemed "the essential aim and the very *raison d'être* of the practical studies on the Middle Ages": "the personal application of these principles", or in other terms, the student's own thesis.

The combination of these three elements thus illustrates two main elements. First, it is clear that the foundation of the *Séminaire* gave an enormous impetus to the (practical) teaching of history at the University of Leuven, as the three different sections were united into one institution, which indicates a growing emphasis on the methodological aspects of the historical discipline.¹⁵⁶ Secondly, this methodological renewal was embedded in the older tradition of the Catholic University to prioritize ecclesiastical history. This symbiosis between methodology and ecclesiastical history can thus be seen to produce a new generation of ecclesiastical historians, who, more so than before, put emphasis on the methodological and practical requirements of the historical discipline. It is this symbiosis that led the Belgian Catholic historian Godefroid Kurth to the conclusion that "for religious history as a speciality, the University of Louvain stands as an important centre today."¹⁵⁷

In relation to the principles described by Cauchie as the foundation of the *Séminaire*, it is beneficial to analyse the students that attended different sections of the *Séminaire*, and how they were influenced by the symbiosis of ecclesiastical and methodological history. First, it is clear that the number of students attending at least one of the three sections had grown rapidly throughout the *Séminaire*'s first decade. Starting with a total of thirty-four in the year 1896-1897, the total of students involved in the *Séminaire* had more than doubled in only nine years (See Appendix 2). It is important

¹⁵⁴ [Alfred Cauchie], *Le Séminaire Historique de Louvain*, pp. 16-17.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 17.

¹⁵⁶ See Rolf Torstendahl, 'Fact, Truth, and Text: The Quest for a Firm Basis for Historical Knowledge around 1900', *History and Theory*, 42 (2003), pp. 305-310.

¹⁵⁷ E. Ned, *L'énergie Belge* (Brussels: 1906), pp. 76.

to note that a significant number of these students were foreign, and were part of different Catholic congregations. Cauchie noted for example how “in 1904-1905 there were among the member of the historical seminar five priests from Holland, a layman from Switzerland, a priest from Saxony, a Benedictine from Germany, a priest and a Recollect from Italy, a Capuchin from England and two from Spain.”¹⁵⁸ It is beneficial to take a closer look at some of these students mentioned by Cauchie, as it helps to give a better understanding of the marked presence of international students at the Catholic University of Leuven, thereby highlighting the international nature of the Catholic institution.

One of the two Italian students connected to the *Séminaire* in the years 1904-1905 was Raphael Eletto Palandri, born in Prato, who would receive his licentiate in *sciences morales et historiques* on June 27, 1905.¹⁵⁹ Palandri, who was part of the Recollect congregation – as was Samuel Bellavance – can be considered as a prime example of the symbiosis of the Catholic principles and historical methods. Palandri would return to Italy where he would take up a position as “general lecturer of ecclesiastical history” at the San Francesco Monastery in Fiesole.¹⁶⁰ Next to his position, Palandri would continue to write historical works related to ecclesiastical and medieval history, highlighting the *Séminaire’s* lasting influence. This is clear for example in his work entitled *Les négociations politiques et religieuses entre la Toscane et la France à l’époque de Cosme Ier et de Catherine de Médicis (1544-1580)* which was dedicated to “my wise and dear mentor Monsieur the professor Alfred Cauchie.”¹⁶¹ Palandri can thus be seen as a clear example of how foreign students at the *Séminaire* would take up the principles taught at the University of Leuven during this period and would return to their native country to apply these principles and methods to their specific regional or national contexts. Consequently, Palandri can be considered an example of how the Catholic University of Leuven figured prominently in a network that was inherently marked by Catholicism and Catholic philosophy during this period.

Next to the group of foreign students who had been influenced by the symbiosis of ecclesiastical and methodological history and would return home to apply these principles to their local contexts, it is instrumental to highlight the Belgian students educated at the *Séminaire* that would ultimately take up positions at the Belgian universities, as this helps to frame the comparison between the French-Canadian and Flemish historians, and helps to understand their connection to a shared

¹⁵⁸ Alfred Cauchie, ‘The teaching of History at Louvain’, pp. 545.

¹⁵⁹ [s.n.], *Annuaire de l’université catholique de Louvain: 69e année*, (Leuven: Vanlinthout, 1906), pp. 184.

¹⁶⁰ [s.n.], *Association des anciens membres du Séminaire historique de l’Université catholique de Louvain: bibliographie*, (Malines: Secretariat de l’Association, 1911), pp. 77.

¹⁶¹ Eletto Palandri, *Les Négociations Politiques Et Religieuses Entre La Toscane Et La France à L’époque De Cosme Ier Et De Catherine De Médicis (1544-1580) D’après Les Documents Des Archives De L’état à Florence Et à Paris* (Paris: A. Picard, 1908), pp. vi.

historiographical tradition. To illustrate this point, it is beneficial to look at the figure of Leo [Léon] Van der Essen, a Belgian historian that would have a significant influence on a number of Flemish historians during the interwar period. Van der Essen was born in Antwerp on December 12, 1883, and would enrol at the University of Leuven at the age of eighteen.¹⁶² Under the tutelage of Cauchie, Van der Essen would receive his doctorate in 1905 – the same year as Palandri.¹⁶³ Van der Essen would combine the ecclesiastical, medieval and methodological principles taught at the *Séminaire* in his doctoral thesis, entitled *Etude critique et littéraire sur les Vitae des saints mérovingiens de l'ancienne Belgique*. Immediately following his graduation, Van der Essen would become Cauchie's teaching assistant, and would gradually take over the latter's responsibilities, particularly the direction and organization of the *Séminaire*.¹⁶⁴ Van der Essen would ultimately become a pivotal figure in the organization and teaching of history at the Catholic University of Leuven – in particular, as we will see later, Van der Essen would have an important influence on Hendrik Elias, who was one of his graduate students – while at the same time we can consider Van der Essen as the continuation of the *Séminaire*'s principles as outlined by Cauchie.¹⁶⁵ In this sense, Van der Essen's relevance to the Flemish nationalist historians enrolled at the Catholic University of Leuven is an indication of how the symbiosis of ecclesiastical history and methodology, in accordance with the Catholic philosophy of neo-Thomism, is an indication of the shared historiographical connection between historians in Quebec and Flanders during this period.

The analysis of the history and organization of the *Séminaire* has thus brought us to two conclusions that we need to consider when analysing Laferrière and his work. First, it has been illustrated how during the last decade of the nineteenth century the teaching of history at the Catholic University of Leuven had transformed into a specialized object of study with an emphasis on ecclesiastical medieval history and the methodological principles of the historical discipline, as exemplified in the figure of Alfred Cauchie. Secondly, the analysis of the organisation of the institutions has shown how the *Séminaire* proved relevant to both foreign students and Belgian students who would take up important positions at the University in the following decades. In this sense, we can consider the *Séminaire* as part of a Catholic network in which the Catholic University of Leuven figured prominently, and which subsequently influenced the historiographical practices in

¹⁶² Claude Bruneel, 'Van Der Essen, Leon', in *Nouvelle Biographie Nationale* (Liege: Groupe Graphique Chauveheid, 2003), pp. 359.

¹⁶³ [s.n.], *Annuaire de l'université catholique de Louvain: 69e année*, (Leuven: Vanlinthout, 1906), pp. 207.

¹⁶⁴ Bruneel, Claude, 'Van der Essen, Leon', pp. 359; Charles Terlinden, 'Léon-Jean Van Der Essen', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 41 (1963), pp. 359-60.

¹⁶⁵ Joris Dedeurwaerder, 'Een Mens Van Vlees En Bloed...? Een Biografie Van Hendrik Jozef Elias Door Pieter Jan Verstraete.', *Bijdragen tot de Eigentijdse Geschiedenis*, 16 (2005), pp. 250.

both Quebec and Flanders. To further prove this point, it is instrumental to analyse Laferrière's years at the Catholic University of Leuven.

I.III.III. Laferrière's historical formation at Leuven

As seen earlier, Laferrière would spend four years at Leuven studying history from 1909-1912, ultimately obtaining his degree in *sciences morales et historiques*. It is first important to stress that Laferrière obtained a doctorate and not a licentiate in the historical and moral sciences. This can be confirmed by Laferrière's enrolment papers on the one hand, clearly stating his enrolment for "docteur" in historical and moral sciences, and his thesis on the other hand, which was – as a result of the law of 1890 – a necessary requirement to obtain a doctorate.¹⁶⁶ While this is only a small detail in Laferrière's career at the University of Leuven, the clarification helps to disprove an assessment made by Ronald Rudin in his *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec*. In describing the historian Gustave Lanctot, Rudin argued that Lanctot was "one of the first French-speaking Quebecers with a PhD in history", specifying in the footnote that Lanctot "may have well been the first such Quebecer, but there are always dangers in asserting that someone was first at anything."¹⁶⁷ As Rudin foresaw himself, Laferrière's doctorate in moral and historical sciences disproves the statement that Lanctot, who studied at Paris and Oxford and ultimately obtained his doctorate in 1919, was the first Quebecer with a PhD in history.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, by not focusing on the traditional emphasis of Quebec historiography on its British and French influences, we are able to discover a more complex array of influences on Quebec historiography during these decades. However, before analysing Laferrière's thesis it is beneficial to take a closer look at the courses the historian had followed, and what these can tell us about the influence it may have had on his thesis, and how they correspond with our analysis of the *Séminaire Historique*.

I.III.III.I. Courses taken by Laferrière

In order to analyse the courses taken by Laferrière, we must first outline the programme of study for the licentiate and doctorate in historical and moral sciences in the years spanning from 1908 until 1912. An overview of the programme of study indicates that there are both mandatory and facultative courses which could be chosen by the student with a clear emphasis on ecclesiastical, medieval and methodological themes (see Appendix 4). By analysing Laferrière's study notes we can reconstruct the courses Laferrière had taken, and, and how these could have influenced his doctoral thesis and later

¹⁶⁶ Correspondences Laferrière, Fonds Abbe Joseph-Ernest Laferrière, CH012, Box 1, Folder CH012/000/000/003, Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe, Saint-Hyacinthe, Canada.

¹⁶⁷ Rudin, Ronald, *Making History*, pp. 40;230.

¹⁶⁸ Lanctot's PhD would ultimately be published. See Gustave Lanctot, *L'administration De La Nouvelle-France: L'administration Générale* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1929).

works. First, the notes make clear that Laferrière, as expected, did take up the mandatory courses required for the doctorate. Laferrière's notes for example indicate he followed the mandatory course *L'histoire politique moderne* in 1910, a course that was taught by Victor Brants who, as we have seen earlier, was also connected to the School of Social and Political Science.¹⁶⁹ Secondly, the notes show how Laferrière, similar to other foreign students such as Palandri, would prioritize ecclesiastical history. This is clear for example by the fact Laferrière took up the facultative course *Introduction à l'histoire ecclésiastique* in his first year at Leuven, in addition to the numerous courses that already focused on medieval and ecclesiastical subjects.¹⁷⁰ The notes on the courses thus confirm that Laferrière followed all the courses required to obtain the doctorate in historical and moral sciences, and show how Laferrière, similar to other students, put emphasis on ecclesiastical history.

The most striking feature of the notes however is the explicit focus on the methodological aspects of the historical discipline during the courses, in addition to the practical and auxiliary science courses (i.e. palaeography) which were compulsory. This is apparent for example from the two courses mentioned earlier. Both courses started with an extensive outline of what the methodological requirements of the historical discipline were before addressing the historical processes of ecclesiastical and modern history. Laferrière for example had an extensive section on methodology during his second class in *Introduction à l'histoire ecclésiastique* on November 23, 1909. He described the "procedures of critique", defined according to Laferrière as "the art of discerning the real from the false in history", before explaining that "when one has at least one document he must establish 1) its provenance (identity) 2) meaning (witness) 3) value (judgement)."¹⁷¹ Laferrière would continue to elaborate on these principles, explaining that there is a distinction between internal and external critique, with the latter being "external critique because it does not describe the document itself, but the external circumstances of its existence."¹⁷²

These elements of historical critique and methodology can also be found in the other course, *L'histoire politique moderne*. The introduction to the course started with, as Laferrière notes, the question of "how to measure the facts[?]", further explaining that in order to address the question "what is the value of written documents?", "material critique" is the first crucial requirement, since

¹⁶⁹ Course notes *Histoire moderne*, 1910, Fonds Abbe Joseph-Ernest Laferrière, CH012, Box 1, Folder CH012/000/000/002.005, Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe, Saint-Hyacinthe, Canada; [s.n.], *Annuaire de l'université catholique de Louvain: 71^{ere} année*, (Leuven: Vanlinthout, 1908), 108.

¹⁷⁰ Course notes *Introduction à l'histoire ecclésiastique*, 1909, Fonds Abbe Joseph-Ernest Laferrière, CH012, Box 1, Folder CH012/000/000/002.002, Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe, Saint-Hyacinthe, Canada.

¹⁷¹ Course notes *Introduction à l'histoire ecclésiastique*, 1909.

¹⁷² Ibid.

“there are documents in modern history that are completely false.”¹⁷³ It is thus important to note that next to the auxiliary sciences and seminars – which explicitly dealt with the methodological issues – the history courses themselves addressed the methodological aspects of the historical discipline as well. The notes, and courses taken, reiterate the argument that the *Séminaire Historique* at the University of Leuven can be considered a symbiosis of ecclesiastical and methodological history. This combination of the ecclesiastical and methodological principles would ultimately culminate in the realisation of Laferrière’s first historical work, his doctoral thesis, and can be considered as a prime example of the historiographical practice at the Catholic University of Leuven.

I.III.III.II. Laferrière’s doctoral thesis

As mentioned in the outline of the programme for the doctorate in historical and moral sciences, the proof of the doctorate consisted of “1: an inaugural dissertation on a historical subject, which needs to be printed; 2: the public defence of the 15 theorems annexed to the dissertation” (See Appendix 4). It is first beneficial to analyse Laferrière’s thesis, and how his work is an illustration of the symbiosis of ecclesiastical and methodological history, and proof that Laferrière, through his education and training, can be considered a fully trained historian in line with the normative demands of the historical discipline.

The first element to highlight is the subject of Laferrière’s doctoral thesis which is an immediate indication of Laferrière’s emphasis on ecclesiastical history: *Étude sur Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, abbé de Saint-Cyran. (1581-1643)*. Jean Duvergier played an instrumental role in the foundation of the Catholic theological movement of Jansenism in France during the seventeenth century.¹⁷⁴ What is interesting to note is Duvergier’s tangible connections to the Low Countries, and Leuven in particular. Next to his extensive correspondence with the Dutch theologian Cornelius Jansen, the basis for Duvergier’s commitment and role in the origin and foundation of Jansenism, Duvergier had studied at the Jesuit College of Leuven.¹⁷⁵ This clear connection to Leuven might be an indication as to why Laferrière chose this subject for his doctoral thesis. As Laferrière explained in his foreword:

The idea of conducting this research came to us while listening to our teacher’s lessons, M. the canon Alfred Cauchie, the eminent director of the *Séminaire historique* at Leuven. In a masterly exposition on the history of Jansenism, the learned professor had treated the principal questions it entails. It is one

¹⁷³ Course notes Histoire moderne, 1910, Fonds Abbe Joseph-Ernest Laferrière, CH012, Box 1, CH012/000/000/002.005.

¹⁷⁴ Joseph Sollier, 'Duvergier De Hauranne', in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909).

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

of these questions that we have tried to study and analyse more in depth, aided and encouraged by the benevolent advice of our professor. We thereby love to take the opportunity to express our deepest gratitude to him.¹⁷⁶

Laferrière's description of his choice for his doctoral subject consequently indicates, secondly, the clear influence Cauchie has had on the origin and development of his thesis. Not only did Cauchie provide Laferrière with the initial questions and dilemmas which could be further explored in a doctoral thesis, Laferrière's reference to the "benevolent advice" and his profound gratitude towards the Leuven professor indicate that Cauchie played a pivotal role in the training and development of Laferrière's historical career.

Secondly, the symbiosis of the principles is above else apparent from the thesis itself, which dealt with the question of the validity of certain biographical statements on the life and career of Jean Duvergier. The methodological influence on Laferrière is clearly illustrated when he dealt with the controversy surrounding Duvergier's attendance at the conference of Bourg-Fontaine on November 19, 1621. Laferrière explained that "this is the date that the legend places the notorious Project of Bourg-Fontaine, reported for the first time in 1654 by Jean Filleau, the king's advocate, in Poitiers."¹⁷⁷ As Laferrière's explanation indicates, the French-Canadian historian constituted the event of Bourg-Fontaine as a legend, and would prove that certain characteristics and descriptions surrounding the event could be considered as false. According to Laferrière, the first indication was the misuse of the concept of deism at the conference. The historian explained that Duvergier "went there [Bourg-Fontaine] to discuss replacing Catholicism with deism," indictating in the footnote that "we immediately see the falsity of this history, as deism could not be the ultimate goal for Saint-Cryan [Duvergier] since he wanted to return to [the principles of] the primitive Church."¹⁷⁸ Secondly, Laferrière pointed to the correspondence between Duvergier and Jansenius, explaining that "certain expressions used by Janesenius in his letters to Duvergier [...] have been used as proof for the reality of the project at Bourg-Fontaine. For example the words: 'cabal', 'mystery', 'secret'."¹⁷⁹ Laferrière rejected this argument however, pointing out that "they don't signify anything else than their mutual friendship, their conflict with the Jesuits, and the 'great affair', i.e. the publication of the alleged doctrines of St. Augustine."¹⁸⁰ Moreover, what is interesting to note about Laferrière's critique is his

¹⁷⁶ Joseph Laferrière, *Étude Sur Jean Duvergier De Hauranne, Abbé De Saint-Cyran (1581-1643)* (Leuven: Wouters-Ickx, 1912), pp. viii.

¹⁷⁷ Joseph Laferrière, *Étude Sur Jean Duvergier*, pp. 60.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 61.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

reference to the work of Camille Callewaert, *Jansénius évêque d'Ypres: ses derniers moments, sa soumission au S. Siège d'après des documents inédits* which had been published in 1893 by the *membres du Séminaire d'histoire ecclésiastique*, indicating once again the growing importance of methodology and ecclesiastical history that had arisen at Leuven during the late nineteenth century, and which had a clear influence on Laferrière, who used the work in his own thesis.¹⁸¹

Finally, in his argument to disprove the veracity of the Bourg-Fontaine conference, Laferrière pointed to the figure of Pierre Camus. Laferrière described how “the name of Pierre Camus included suffices in itself to constitute the legend as improbable,” pointing out that the French seventeenth century Jesuit writer Pierre Rapin – who wrote a *Histoire du Jansénisme* – “does not range him amongst the Jansenists” nor did Rapin’s critic, the nineteenth century French literary scholar Charles Augustin Saint-Beuve, who claimed that “M. de Saint-Cryan [Duvergier] could not, in any case, establish a complete or imprudent trust with him [Camus].”¹⁸² The case of the Bourg-Fontaine conference, and the argument Laferrière made about its truthfulness and the methods he used to prove his argument are an illustrative example of how the teachings of historical methodology Laferrière had received during his years at Leuven had influenced the historian, and strengthen the argument that Laferrière can be considered a fully-trained historian in line with the normative demands of the historical discipline.

This can be further illustrated by the two reviews on his thesis: one short review by André Lesort and one extensive analysis by Charles Urbain which will be the main emphasis. First, it should be noted that both reviews are critical of Laferrière’s project. Lesort pointed to the fact Laferrière “could have elaborated his research on Duvergier de Hauranne’s youth, on his first term in the diocese of Bayonne, on his grand vicariate in the diocese of Poitiers and his contact with the abbey of Saint-Cryan.”¹⁸³ Charles Urbain was even more critical of Laferrière, questioning the validity of Laferrière’s doctoral thesis, while stating that “a doctoral thesis should not only illustrate the candidate’s capacity of assimilating others’ work, but, even more, through a treatment of unreleased [sources] or renewal of a subject, prove that he is capable of advancing the sciences via his personal research.”¹⁸⁴ However, regardless of the critique, Urbain did not question Laferrière’s capabilities as a historian. As Urbain explained himself,

¹⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 62.

¹⁸² Joseph Laferrière, *Étude Sur Jean Duvergier*, pp. 62.

¹⁸³ André Lesort, 'J. Laferrière. Etude Sur Jean Duvergier De Hauranne, Abbé De Saint-Cryan (1581-1643)', *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 74 (1913), pp. 133.

¹⁸⁴ Urbain, Charles. “Joseph Laferrière. Étude sur Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, abbé de Saint-Cryan. (1581-1643),” *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France* 20 (1913): 155.

This work which, without a doubt, has the appearance of a doctoral thesis, and whose orthodoxy is guaranteed by the rector of the University of Leuven, illustrates the real qualities of the historian. In particular, the author possesses the gift of clarifying multiple and confusing testimonies, and to formulate in a clear fashion. He is prudent in his affirmations and moderated in his judgements.¹⁸⁵

Urbain's critique on Laferrière should thus be viewed as a critique on the novelty of the doctoral project which Urbain considered the most important feature of such a work, and not on the capabilities of Laferrière as a historian which he did acknowledge. Lesort's critique is taken from a similar point of view, as a critique on the novelty of the doctoral thesis, but not on the validity of Laferrière as a fully trained historian. Lesort, just as Urbain, praised Laferrière for having undertaken his research, considering, as Lesort points out, that it is "a particularly arduous task of deciphering – out the writings of the Jesuits, who opposed his theories, and those of Port-Royal, who admired him – what exactly the role of Duvergier was in the history of the Church in France."¹⁸⁶ Both reviews thus held a critical view on Laferrière's thesis, more particularly on the novelty of the project, but what is important to conclude from these two reviews is that both reviewers, despite their critiques, acknowledged Laferrière's methodological capabilities as a historian, and can be taken as proof that Laferrière could be considered as a fully trained historian at the beginning of the twentieth century. Moreover, Laferrière's thesis can be considered as a prime example of the historiographical practice at the Catholic University of Leuven during this period, highlighting the combination of the methodological normative demands with the emphasis on ecclesiastical history as conventional historiographical practice at the university.

I.III.III.III. The fifteen theorems

In addition to a printed doctoral thesis, a student graduating in historical and moral sciences from the Catholic University of Leuven had to publicly defend fifteen theorems. What is crucial to note about these theorems is that they did not necessarily have to address the subject of the doctoral thesis but could include more general subjects relating to the historical discipline or the history of a country or region. This is apparent from Laferrière's theorems which had to be defended publicly in front of a jury, and which, in Laferrière's case, included Leo Van der Essen and Lodewijk Scharpé, who would both play an influential role in the historical formation and career of Hendrik Elias.¹⁸⁷ The theorems that are of most importance to this analysis, and to the comparison with the Flemish historians, are

¹⁸⁵ Charles Urbain, 'Joseph Laferrière. Étude Sur Jean Duvergier De Hauranne, Abbé De Saint-Cyran. (1581-1643)', *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France*, 20 (1913), pp. 155

¹⁸⁶ André Lesort, 'J. Laferrière. Etude Sur Jean Duvergier', pp. 133.

¹⁸⁷ Newspaper Article *La Metropole*, February 24, 1912, Fonds Abbe Joseph-Ernest Laferrière, CH012, Box 1, Folder CH012/000/000/003.001.108, Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe, Saint-Hyacinthe, Canada.

those commenting on the historical discipline on the one hand, and those addressing the nature of Canadian history on the other hand (see Appendix 5).

The first theorem (I) is a comment on the essence of the historical discipline and requires further analysis as it posits an important element in the comparison between the French-Canadian and Flemish historians, and the influence of the similar tradition. By stating that history will never attain a complete certitude of its internal evidence, Laferrière makes clear two elements. First of all, the emphasis on internal evidence as the basis of the historical discipline distinguishes it from the exact sciences, and can be considered as an affirmation of the general perception of the historical discipline at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁸⁸ Langlois and Seignobos, whose seminal manual *Introduction aux études historiques* was highly influential during these decades and which is mentioned in theorem II, stated for example that “historical knowledge is essentially indirect knowledge. The methods of historical science ought, therefore, to be radically different from those of the direct sciences; that is to say, of all the other sciences, except geology, which are founded on direct observation.”¹⁸⁹ In this sense, Laferrière’s characterization of history as a discipline that relies on internal evidence (i.e. historical sources) can be considered as the reiteration of the general convention regarding the definition of history at the beginning of the twentieth century. The second element however, as a consequence of the first, is that according to Laferrière, history, due to its unique reliance on internal evidence, can never attain a complete objectivity. This is a clear argument against the aforementioned Langlois and Seignobos, who despite the reliance on internal evidence claimed that “in spite of these disadvantages, it is possible for this [historical] method to lead to scientific knowledge.”¹⁹⁰ This specific conceptualization of objectivity and subjectivity in the historical discipline, and the unattainability of complete objectivity constitute important elements in the comparison between historians in Flanders and Quebec, and will be further discussed in Chapter III, as they highlight the influence of neo-Thomism on the historiographical practices in both cases.

Laferrière’s claim on the uncertainty of historical knowledge is of crucial importance because it posits two essential principles. First, by stating that history can never attain a complete objectivity, Laferrière accepts the relevance of subjectivity in the historical discipline. In Laferrière’s description of the historical discipline, the role of the historian was not simply that of an observer of historical

¹⁸⁸ Rolf Torstendahl, 'Fact, Truth, and Text', pp. 321-328; 1 Raphael Lutz, 'The Implications of Empiricism for History', in *The Sage Handbook of Historical Theory*, ed. by Nancy Partner and Sarah Foot (London: SAGE Publications, 2013), pp. 25-27.

¹⁸⁹ Charles-Victor Langlois, and Charles Seignobos, *Introduction to the Study of History*. trans. G.G. Berry (Edinburgh: Ballantyne Press, 1898), pp. 64.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 65.

facts, but that of an active contributor, which, due to the nature of the historical discipline, is not a negative factor. This emphasis on the historian and his motivations as a crucial fundament of history is a perspective that, as we will see later, was widely shared amongst historians of both Quebec and Flanders, with both Groulx and Elias commenting on the impossibility to ascertain complete objectivity in the historical discipline.¹⁹¹ Secondly, by denouncing the impossibility of certainty in history Laferrière implicitly denies the possibility of certainty in the future, and, specifically, the possibility of discerning universal laws in history to predict the future. Consequently, by dismissing the possibility of historians discerning universal laws in history, Laferrière argued that there could be another force at play in the development of history which was to a certain extent unknowledgeable to humans. In this sense, by stating the uncertainty of history, Laferrière posits the importance and role God plays in the ultimate development of history (and humans in general). This connection between the uncertainty of history on the one hand and the importance God has in this conception on the other hand is clearly illustrated by Laferrière's second theorem, in which he discusses the possibility of miracles in history.

A first element that needs to be addressed with regards to the second theorem is the fact that Laferrière, in line with other French-Canadian historians such as Groulx, held a critical view of Langlois' and Seignobos' *Introduction aux études historiques*.¹⁹² It shows the prominence of the manual in the historical discipline at the beginning of the twentieth century, as is clear not only by the criticisms of the French-Canadian historians, but also by the fact that it was translated in different languages and was explicitly stated in Laferrière's public defense at Leuven, which implies that it was widely read or at least known amongst historians at the Catholic University of Leuven.¹⁹³ Langlois and Seignobos, as illustrated earlier, distinguished history from the exact sciences, stating that history was based on indirect knowledge which could attain a certain sense of objectivity if the historical method was conducted properly. However, this had some considerable consequences for the two historians' treatment of the concept of miracle. As the historians argued, a fact could only become a miracle when "it is in conflict with a true science", explaining that when a "fact is only in conflict with history, psychology, or sociology, all imperfectly established sciences; we then simply call the fact *improbable*," with a clear emphasis on the fact that "*improbability* is not a scientific notion; it varies with the individual."¹⁹⁴ Langlois and Seignobos' distinction between the exact sciences as "true" science and

¹⁹¹ See notes 124 and 160.

¹⁹² Ronald Rudin, *Making History*, pp. 29-31.

¹⁹³ Van der Essen for example makes ample references to Langlois and Seignobos in his course manual *Historische Kritiek*. See Leo Van der Essen, *Historische Kritiek. Cursus Goedgekeurd Door L. Van Der Essen* (Leuven).

¹⁹⁴ Charles-Victor Langlois, and Charles Seignobos, *Introduction to the Study of History*, pp. 206.

history and others as “imperfect” subsequently constructed a certain hierarchy for all sciences in which the exact sciences were rated as most valuable, as is clear not only by their designation as true science, but also by the indication that a fact can only become a miracle when in conflict with the exact sciences. Consequently, Langlois and Seignobos did not believe in the existence of miracles in history, explaining that

The observations whose results are contained in historical documents are never of equal value with those of contemporary scientists [...] The indirect method of history is always inferior to the direct methods of the sciences of observation. If its results do not harmonise with theirs, it is history which must give way; historical science, with its imperfect means of information, cannot claim to check, contradict, or correct the results of other sciences, but must rather use their results to correct its own.¹⁹⁵

In addition to the inferiority of the historical method, Langlois and Seignobos pointed out that “the very notion of a miracle is metaphysical; it implies a conception of the universe as a whole which transcends the limits of observation,” thereby emphasising the element of direct observation as a distinguishing factor between the exact sciences and history, rendering the possibility of a miracle in history impossible due to its indirect method.¹⁹⁶

Laferrière’s rejection of Langlois’ and Seignobos’ theory on the historical method and the impossibility of a miracle in history thus reveals two factors which need to be further explained. First, the dismissal of the two historians’ description of the notion of the miracle in history is a general rejection of the historians’ characterization of history as inferior to the exact sciences based on the difference in method, with the exact sciences defined by their reliance on direct observation in contrast to history’s indirect method. The hierarchy Langlois and Seignobos constructed based on this difference was thus rejected by Laferrière, and it subsequently indicates that Laferrière equated the historical and exact sciences with the same normative scientific standards. The rejection Laferrière made with regards to the hierarchy of the sciences thus validates the subjective nature of the historical discipline on the one hand whilst recognizing on the other hand the scientific essence of that discipline. This symbiosis of science and subjectivity as the fundament of the historical essence characterized the historiography of both regions, and Laferrière’s rejection of Langlois and Seignobos, in addition to his formation as an ecclesiastical historian, are indications of the shared tradition of historians in Flanders and Quebec, and will constitute the core of Chapter III, in which the dilemma of the symbiosis of subjectivity and objectivity will be related to the neo-Thomist philosophy.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 207.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

Secondly, Laferrière's dismissal of the two French historians' definition of the concept of miracle indicates that, according to Laferrière, a miracle was not exclusively metaphysical, which has two further consequences. On the one hand, by claiming the existence of miracles in history, Laferrière ascribed a role to God in the purpose and development of history. By stating that history could never be completely certain, Laferrière left open the possibility of miracles happening in history, which, in line with his Catholic worldview, was ascribed to God overseeing the course of history. On the other hand, by rejecting Langlois' and Seignobos' definition of a miracle as transcending the limits of observation, effectively being metaphysical, Laferrière implies that miracles occur in the physical world, and are recordable, as the numerous (ecclesiastical) documents relating to miracles prove.¹⁹⁷ The consequence of this interpretation of miracles in history is, ironically, the importance of human individuals in the course and development of history. By claiming that miracles are not only metaphysical, but within our limits of observation, Laferrière ascribed a specific role to humans as active observers, or even participants, in the miracle. What this highlights is that in Laferrière's argument for the existence of miracles in history there is a complex interplay between the uncertain forces in history and the human individual that, even in this uncertainty, is ascribed a certain freedom and active agency, and can help dictate and develop the course of history, despite its essentially unintelligible nature. Humans should then be considered not as mere recipients of a metaphysical dictum – God defines everything in history – but as active agents in the formation of history that is in its essence only intelligible to God. This Catholic conception that constitutes the basis of Laferrière's second theorem played a crucial role in the conceptualization of history in both regions, and will be further explored in Chapter IV, when the concept of teleology in accordance with the neo-Thomist philosophy will be further analysed in the nationalist historiographies of Quebec and Flanders.

In addition to the theorems addressing the historical discipline in general, and which show the theoretical fundaments that shaped Laferrière's conceptualization of history, the last two theorems concern the French-Canadian's view on Canadian history. Considering Laferrière has only scarcely written on Canadian history, these theorems are of great value in understanding how Laferrière interpreted Canadian history during this period, and how this can be related to the larger French-Canadian historiographical context of the first decade of the twentieth century. The penultimate theorem deals with the history of the colony of New France during the second half of the seventeenth century and can shed a light on the traditional historiographical portrayal of the French-Iroquois relations during the colonial period. Roughly speaking, Laferrière's theorems deal with the last phase

¹⁹⁷ It's these kind of documents Langlois and Seignobos reject as unscientific, whilst the Catholic historians would argue that they can be considered as historical sources if, and only if, they withstand the historical critique.

of hostilities between French settlers and the Iroquois, starting with the disastrous expedition by governor Le Barre in 1683 and ending with the treaty of Utrecht in 1713 and death of Louis XIV the subsequent year.¹⁹⁸ Laferrière's emphasis on this specific period, in addition to the argument he made in the theorem itself, can be seen as a typical example of the traditional historiography on New France and the relations with the Iroquois.

First of all, Laferrière's emphasis on the seventeenth century can be seen as an example of the French-Canadian historiography's focus on the history of New France during this period, illustrating the historians' (implicit) belief of the paramount importance of the history of the French colony prior to the British Conquest.¹⁹⁹ Some of the most prominent historians of this period – Groulx, Gustave Lanctot, Léo-Paul Desrosiers, Ivanhoe Caron, E-Z Massicotte – had written extensively on the history of New France, which compels us to see Laferrière's theorem as an indication of a larger historiographical practice in Quebec.²⁰⁰ Secondly, there is the traditional portrayal of the Iroquois in French-Canadian historiography as a violent and barbaric people that had to be combatted. This perceived dialectic between the civilized French on the one hand and the barbaric Iroquois on the other hand was omnipresent in French-Canadian historiography throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, as was clear for example in the writings of the French-Canadian historian Léo-Paul Desrosiers, who, as late as 1947, quoted Marie de l'Incarnation as his source, which stated that "the Iroquois are deceitful, and all their peace propositions are nothing else than plots to dispose us."²⁰¹ This fixation by Desrosiers on Marie de l'Incarnation, a seventeenth century Ursuline, as one of his main sources to explain Iroquois-French relations leads to the final element. Desrosier's reference can be seen as an indication of a larger historiographical practice that has recently been coined "Jesuit Historiography", and can help to explain why Laferrière claimed that the French governors fulfilled a humanitarian act by protecting their allies from Iroquois hostilities.²⁰² The crucial characteristic of this historiographical practice is its fixation on Jesuit sources – in particular the extensive sources of the *Jesuit Relations*, which are comprised of the annual reports sent to France by the French missionaries

¹⁹⁸ For more on the 17th century French-Iroquois relations, see Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire. The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from Its Beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744* (New York: Norton & Company, 1984), pp. 84-112.

¹⁹⁹ José António Brandão, *"Your Fyre Shall Burn No More": Iroquois Policy Towards New France and Its Native Allies to 1701* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), pp. 5-18.

²⁰⁰ See Lionel Groulx, *Notre Maître, Le Passé* (Montreal: Bibliothèque de l'Action française, 1924), pp. 13-138; Gustave Lanctot, *L'administration De La Nouvelle-France*; Ivanhoe Caron, *La Colonisation Du Canada Sous La Domination Française: Précis Historique* (Quebec: 1916); E-Z Massicotte, *Dollard Des Ormeaux Et Ses Compagnons: Notes Et Documents* (Montreal: 1920).

²⁰¹ Léo-Paul Desrosiers, 'Premières Missions Iroquoises', *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 1 (1947), pp. 1.

²⁰² For more on the concept, see Scott Stevens, 'The Historiography of New France and the Legacy of Iroquois Internationalism', *Comparative American Studies*, 11 (2013), pp. 151-61.

in New France.²⁰³ If we take Desrosier's article again, it is illustrative to note that next to Marie de l'Incarnation, the only source the French-Canadian historian used throughout the entire article is the *Jesuit Relations*.²⁰⁴

Two elements need to be further highlighted to illustrate how Laferrière's theorem fits into this historiographical tradition. First, there was the problem of the validity of the primary source, the *Jesuit Relations*, that constituted the basis of this historiographical tradition. Despite its ethnographical merits – the source entailed a wide array of descriptions of First Nations' customs, practices, habits – the annual reports of the *Jesuit Relations* were edited and published in Paris and were specifically intended for a French audience.²⁰⁵ Consequently, Jesuit historiography should be considered as a French appropriation of native history, and as such implied an uneven balance between the prevalent historical actors, the French and the First Nations.²⁰⁶ This was clear in Laferrière's emphasis on the French governors in his theorem as prime actors in seventeenth-century French colonial history. A French governor, as explained by Laferrière's contemporary Gustave Lanctot, was "free to decide on peace or war with the Indians or to push the tribes to wage war amongst themselves. He also had the right to decide whether it was better for the good of the colony, to let them wander the lands or settle them in the villages."²⁰⁷ Consequently, the governor in this interpretation was the prime actor in the history of New France, condemning the native people to a secondary role, who could be manipulated, protected or combatted if the French governor deemed it necessary. This hierarchy between the French governor and the Iroquois and other tribes was also highlighted in Laferrière's theorem, which indicates that it is the governor that protected the allied native people, and decided to fight the Iroquois during the last decades of the seventeenth century.

This leads to the second element, Laferrière's characterization of the French governors' act to protect their allies as "humanitarian". On the one hand, this framing reconfirms the dominant position of the French governor over his allies in this historiographical practice. On the other hand, classifying the governors' decision to protect their allies as humanitarian is an indication of the Catholic philosophy that constituted the basis of the Jesuit historiography. To highlight this, it is crucial to analyse the position of the allied native people in the historiographical practice, which are pivotal in understanding why Laferrière considered the governors' actions as selfless or humanitarian. The

²⁰³ Allan Greer, *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), pp. 1.

²⁰⁴ The *Jesuit Relations* is mentioned 11 times in the article, see Léo-Paul Desrosiers, 'Premières missions iroquoises'.

²⁰⁵ Allan Greer, *The Jesuit relations*, pp. 14.

²⁰⁶ Scott Stevens, 'The Historiography of New France', pp. 151-152.

²⁰⁷ Gustave Lanctot, *L'administration de la Nouvelle-France*, pp. 32.

context and genesis of the essential source, the *Jesuit Relations*, was one marked by French Catholic missionaries attempting to proselytise the First Nations people.²⁰⁸ Consequently, missionaries would often attempt, while analysing the beliefs and customs of the native people, to draw comparisons with Christian myths and beliefs, and show that despite the natives' difference in customs and habits, which had rendered them, according to these missionaries, inferior, they were still God's children and could be converted. The French Catholic missionary Jean de Brebeuf for example noted in his contribution to the *Jesuit Relation* on the customs of the Hurons, that

There are some indications that they [Hurons] had formerly some more than natural knowledge of the true God, as may be remarked in some particulars of their fables; and even if they had had only that which Nature can furnish to them, still they ought to have been more reasonable on this subject [...] For not having been willing to acknowledge God in their habits and actions, they have lost the thought of Him and have become worse than beasts in His sight, and as regards the respect they have for Him.²⁰⁹

By characterizing the native people as God's children that have lost their way, Jesuit historiography could put emphasis on its main purpose – proselytization – by portraying the French as beneficiary Christians who committed a humanitarian act by protecting their allies – i.e. the converted natives – from the horrific and violent acts of those that had lost their way, in this case the Iroquois. It is this aspect that helps to explain why Laferrière assessed the French governors' role with regards to their native allies as humanitarian, as it is a reiteration of the Jesuit historiographical tradition of portraying the French as protecting their soon-to-be Christian allies.

In addition to this older tradition of Jesuit historiography expressed in the penultimate theorem, the final statement of Laferrière's doctoral defence reveals another historiographical practice that was prevalent in French Canada during this period, and highlights how Laferrière can be considered as a typical French-Canadian historian. Laferrière's claim that it is because of French Canada's loyalty to England that the country could maintain its colony can be considered as an expression of the historiographical practice of French-Canadian loyalism.²¹⁰ As the historian Damien-Claude Bélanger noted, French-Canadian loyalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth century had an important influence in French Canada, and led to a specific historiographical practice during this

²⁰⁸ See Allan Greer, *The Jesuit relations*.

²⁰⁹ Jean De Brebeuf, *What the Hurons Think About Their Origin*. ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents. Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France: Volume X* (New York: Pageant Book, 1959), pp. 124.

²¹⁰ For more on loyalism in general, see Lowry, Donal "The Crown, Empire Loyalism and the Assimilation of Non-British White Subjects in the British World: An Argument against 'Ethnic Determinism'," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 31 (2003): 96-120.

period, as exemplified by the historian and politician Thomas Chapais.²¹¹ This loyalist historiography was marked by two essential elements. First of all, there was the belief that French Canada, because of its adherence to the British institutions in the second half of the eighteenth century was spared of the violence and revolutions that had swept the United States, France and the rest of Europe during this period, and, as a result, had permitted Catholic French Canada to continue to exist.²¹² Chapais explained with regards to French Canada's decision on the American Revolution that "by allying with the [American] Congress we would have perished amongst the 13 Colonies; by remaining British subjects, we have conserved our population and cohesion."²¹³ Secondly, in this historiographical practice historians would highlight the importance of French-Canadian loyalty to the British institutions during the eighteenth century and its rejection of the American Revolution as proof that it played a vital role in the survival of the colony. Thomas Chapais explained how

We have shown ourselves to be loyal to the oath of our alliance. A large number of Canadians took up arms to push back the invaders, and, on December 31, 1775, with Quebec under siege, we dealt a striking blow to the [American] Congress that guaranteed England's control over one of its most beautiful colonies.²¹⁴

It is in this loyalist historiographical context that we have to situate Laferrière's theorem, and consider his comment on the role of the loyalist French-Canadians in the eighteenth century as an indication of a more general historiographical interpretation of French-Canadian history during this period. It should however be noted that the growing French-Canadian rejection of British institutions would render this historiographical practice obsolete during the interwar period.²¹⁵ Laferrière's theorem should thus be considered as an indication of a pre-war historiographical interpretation that, under the influence of nationalist historians such as Groulx, would become archaic during the following decades, leading Laferrière, as we will see later, to reconsider his interpretation of national history.

The four theorems discussed here thus illustrate two important elements about Laferrière's education at the Catholic University of Leuven. First, it has been illustrated that Laferrière had taken up the scientific and ecclesiastical principles that were the essence of the historical training at Leuven. Not only his thesis, but the theorems rejecting Langlois and Seignobos' interpretation of history show how Laferrière adhered to the ecclesiastical principles that were taught at the *Séminaire historique*,

²¹¹ Bélanger, Damien-Claude. "Thomas Chapais, loyaliste," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 65 (2012): 439-472.

²¹² See D.R. Oram, 'Canada and the Empire', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume V: Historiography*, ed. by Robin Winks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 148-151.

²¹³ Thomas Chapais, *Discours Et Conférences* (Quebec: Imprimerie de L.-J. Demers, 1897), pp. 23.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Damien-Claude Bélanger, 'Thomas Chapais, loyaliste', pp. 470-472.

whilst simultaneously illustrating a clear understanding of the methodological conventions of the historical discipline. Secondly, the last two theorems that dealt specifically with Canadian history reveal how Laferrière can be considered as a traditional French-Canadian historian that was embedded in the historiographical practices of French Canada during this period, as has been clear by his portrayal of First Nations and their relation with the French colonists on the one hand, and his loyalist interpretation of French-Canadian history on the other hand.

The prevalence of the traditional French-Canadian historiography, combined with the intrinsic particularities of his historical training at Leuven, thus constitute Laferrière as the prime example of the French-Canadian historian during this period, showing on the one hand an understanding of the normative scientific principles of the historical discipline, whilst on the other hand illustrating the influence of not only the ecclesiastical principles, but also the traditional French-Canadian historiographical practices. In conclusion, Laferrière, because of his training at Leuven, can be considered as the crucial mediator between the French-Canadian and Flemish historians, clearly highlighting the historiographical connection that existed between the two regions, which is necessary to compare the historiographical practices of both regions and their similarities and differences. Consequently, it is instrumental to highlight how Laferrière's education and training was similar to that of the Flemish nationalist historians so we can firmly establish a shared historiographical tradition between the two regions.

I.III.IV. Conclusion: The Lasting Belgian Legacy

Having analysed Laferrière and the other French-Canadians at the Catholic University of Leuven, and having shown the prevalence of the ecclesiastical and methodological principles that influenced French-Canadian historians during this period, the question remains whether we can conceive Laferrière and the other French-Canadians as part of a wider group that had been influenced by the Belgian Catholic historiographical tradition. In other words: did the Belgian Catholic historiographical context – and Leuven in particular – leave a mark on the broader French-Canadian historiographical context during the first half of the twentieth century?

To analyse the lasting influence of the Belgian Catholic historiographical context on the French-Canadian practice, it is important to emphasise two elements. On the one hand, the lasting effects of the University of Leuven on the French-Canadian students should be traced, as it could be argued that their time at Leuven was not relevant to their later career and works. On the other hand, it is crucial to see if the Belgian Catholic historiographical practice and context can be traced back to historians that did not study at Leuven, because this highlights how the influence of the Belgian historiographical context was not limited to the specific group of students that had studied at Leuven,

but constituted a crucial element of the French-Canadian historiographical context, and, consequently, makes it a relevant element in the comparison with the Flemish case.

I.III.IV.I. Lasting Influence of the Catholic University of Leuven

In the assessment of the role of the Catholic University of Leuven on the French-Canadian historiography, it is crucial to analyse how the ecclesiastical, philosophical and methodological principles had a lasting effect on the French-Canadian students throughout their careers and the works they had written. Arthur Robert for example, in his *Leçons de logique* made numerous references to Désiré Mercier, the founder of the *Institut supérieur de philosophie* at the University of Leuven in 1889, authoritative scholar in neo-thomist philosophy and a colleague of Alfred Cauchie – who taught at the Theology Faculty.²¹⁶ The reference by Robert to Mercier, who embodies all three essential principles prevalent at Leuven during this period, can be seen as an indication that the Catholic University of Leuven had a lasting effect on the French-Canadian studying at the university during this period. A clear illustration of the historiographical effects of the Belgian context on the French-Canadian historians is Laferrière's continued reference to the Belgian Catholic historians.

As one of Laferrière students noted in the wake of his death, "He [Laferrière] could have made a worthwhile contribution to the teaching of history in our classical seminaries, if it wasn't for multiple external circumstances that took up all his free time", indicating that compared to other interwar historians such as Groulx for example, the amount of historical works Laferrière had written was limited, and can help to explain why the priest-historian has largely been neglected in the historiography.²¹⁷ However, the works that Laferrière did write during the interwar period still show the continued influence of the Belgian Catholic historians on his interpretation of history. If we take for example Laferrière's article *L'art et la science en histoire*, presented during the conference *Semaine d'histoire du Canada* in 1925, the lasting Belgian influence becomes apparent. In the bibliography of the historian's article there is not only the clear presence of his own mentor, Alfred Cauchie, but also the reference to other historians that had worked and taught at the Catholic University of Leuven, including Jean Moeller whose son Charles, as seen earlier, was teaching at the University of Leuven during Laferrière's sojourn, and the priest historian Charles de Smedt, who had written a historical work entitled *Principes de la critique historique* in 1883, and who had been in close contact with other

²¹⁶ See for example Arthur Robert, *Leçons de logique*, (Quebec: la Librairie de l'Action catholique, s.d.), pp. 155. For more on Mercier, see Roberecht Boudens, *Kardinaal Mercier en de Vlaamse Beweging*, (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1975).

²¹⁷ Necrology Laferrière, CH012/000/000/009 Fonds Abbe Joseph-Ernest Laferrière, CH012, Box 1, Folder CH012/000/000/009, Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe, Saint-Hyacinthe, Canada.

Belgian Catholic historians, including Cauchie and Godefroid Kurth.²¹⁸ Moreover, the fact that out of the six works Laferrière used in his article, four are written by Belgian Catholic historians, can be considered as an indication that throughout his career and writings Laferrière continued to rely on the Belgian Catholic historiographical principles and practices he had been taught during his stay at the University of Leuven.²¹⁹

I.III.IV.II. The Bigger Picture: Belgian Catholic historians and French-Canadian historiography

The question that remains is to assess whether the Belgian Catholic historiographical context which had a clear influence on the French-Canadian students attending the Catholic University of Leuven can be extended, and to see whether the French-Canadians at Leuven are an indication of a larger influence of the Belgian historians on the French-Canadian historiography. A first indication to analyse the wider influence is to return to the *Semaine d'histoire du Canada* conference, as this can be considered a good starting point since it brought together a wide range of French-Canadian historians, and constituted an important event in the development of the historical discipline in Quebec during this period.²²⁰ Amongst these historians we can again see a clear reliance on Belgian Catholic historians in their articles and conference proceedings, and see how the French-Canadian historians relied on the Belgian Catholic historians to formulate their interpretation of history and how it should be conducted. The priest-historian Albert-Marie Mignault, who was a doctor in theology, the historian Henri-Arthur Scott, who had written a historiographical work entitled *Nos anciens historiographes et autres études d'histoire canadienne*, and Olivier Maurault, a close friend of Groulx and later rector of the Université de Montréal, all made reference to Belgian Catholic historians, including the aforementioned Jean Moeller and Charles de Smedt, and, in the case of Maurault, the prominent Belgian Catholic historian Godefroid Kurth.²²¹ The references these French-Canadian historians made to the Belgian Catholic historians show how the influence of this particular historiographical context

²¹⁸ See Hippolyte Delehaye, *Notice Sur Le Père Charles De Smedt* (Brussels: Hayez, 1923); Bernard Joassart, 'Victor De Buck (1817-1876), Charles De Smedt (1833-1911), Hippolyte Delehaye (1859-1941). Trois Figures De Bollandistes Contemporains.', in *Les Intellectuels Catholiques En Belgique Francophone Aux 19e Et 20e Siècles.*, ed. by Guy Zelis (2009), pp. 195-207.

²¹⁹ Joseph Laferrière, 'L'art Et La Science En Histoire', in *Semaine D'histoire Du Canada : Première Session Tenue À La Bibliothèque Saint-Sulpice À Montréal Du 23 Au 27 Novembre 1925 Sous Les Auspices De La Société Historique De Montréal* 19: *Compte Rendu Et Mémoires* (Montreal: Société Historique de Montréal, 1926), pp. 149-61.

²²⁰ Ronald Rudin, *Making History*, pp. 45.

²²¹ Jean-Baptiste Arthur Allaire, *Dictionnaire Biographique Du Clergé Canadien-Français. Cinquième Supplément* (Montreal: Imprimerie de l'École catholique des sourds-muets, 1910), pp. 67; *Ibid.*, *Dictionnaire biographique. Les Contemporains*, pp. 536; examples of the references are Albert-Marie Mignault, 'La formation de l'archiviste', pp. 121; Henri-Arthur Scott, 'Materiaux de l'histoire', pp. 132-133; Olivier Maurault, 'Y a-t-il une conception catholique de l'histoire?', pp. 173.

was not limited to those students that had studied at Leuven, but was influential amongst a larger group of French-Canadian (Catholic) historians.

However, the clearest example of the Belgian influence on French-Canadian historians is Lionel Groulx. As indicated before, Groulx had contemplated going to Leuven to study before ultimately preferring Fribourg. Despite not going to Leuven, the Belgian historiographical context would continue to have an influence on the writings of Groulx, most notably via the figure of Godefroid Kurth, the prominent Belgian Catholic historian that had been crucial in Belgian historiography since the last quarter of the nineteenth century.²²² Kurth, who as first Belgian historian had introduced practical lessons (*cours pratiques*) at the University of Liège in the 1870s, is a clear example of the ecclesiastical and methodological principles that were vital in the organization and structure of the *Séminaire historique* at the Catholic University of Leuven. It is no wonder that Kurth spoke highly of the university, explaining that “for religious history as a speciality, the University of Louvain stands as an important centre today”²²³ In addition to Kurth’s influence on the Belgian historiographical context, the Belgian historian was of importance to Groulx, who explained in his *Mémoires* how he “had almost entirely read [the works of] Godfroid Kurth, who had impressed him [Groulx] by his remarkable erudition, his philosophical spirit and the grand motives he could give to history.”²²⁴ This fascination for Kurth however was not limited to his memoirs, but could also be traced back in Groulx’s historical works, in which he would often refer to the Belgian Catholic historian when explaining the essence of history. Groulx for example explained in his work *Vers l’émancipation* how

in history, we do not believe in definitive works. The historian that knows his metier, knows to be modest. ‘Nobody can fully grasp history’ Godefroid Kurth said, that old master who had nonetheless claimed ‘to have grown old in front of the charters.’ In front of the numerous piles of documents for which a reading of all of it would demand an innumerable amount of human lives, one can’t ask more from a researcher than a loyal investigation, which consists of making many choices and having a large amount of intuition and an absolute integrity.²²⁵

In a similar fashion as Kurth, Laferrière, Cauchie, Van der Essen and the Flemish historians, Groulx did not believe a completely objective history was feasible, and as such, in accordance with the explicit reference to Kurth, highlights how the Belgian Catholic historiography had an influence on the broader

²²² Herman Paul, ‘Voorbeeld En Voorganger. Robert Fruin En Godefroid Kurth Als Vaders Van De Geschiedwetenschap’, *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* (2011), pp. 30-53; Leen Dorsman, ‘De Nieuwe Eruditie’, pp. 170-175.

²²³ See footnote 157.

²²⁴ Lionel Groulx, *Mes Memoires*. Vol. 1 (Montreal: Fides, 1970), pp. 266-267.

²²⁵ Lionel Groulx, *Vers L’émancipation. (Première Période). Cours D’histoire Du Canada À L’université De Montréal*, (Montreal: Bibliothèque de l’Action française, 1921), pp. 7.

French-Canadian historiography, in addition to the French-Canadian students that had studied at the Catholic University of Leuven.

In conclusion, it has been shown that the Belgian Catholic historians – particularly the *Séminaire historique* at the Catholic University of Leuven – had a crucial influence on the historians of French-Canada during the first half of the twentieth century. However, it should be noted that in addition to the Belgian historiography, the French-Canadian historiography was marked by other external influences, most importantly the French historiographical context.²²⁶ What is crucial to understand however, and what has been argued up until this point, is that the Belgian Catholic historiographical context, with its clear emphasis on ecclesiastical and methodological norms in accordance with the neo-Thomist philosophy, which will be analysed in Chapter II, is of crucial importance to understand and frame the historiography of French Canada during the first half of the twentieth century. It is this understanding that is crucial when comparing the French-Canadian and Flemish case.

I.IV. Flemish nationalist historians and the Belgian historiographical context

Hitherto we have established a clear connection between French-Canadians and the Catholic University of Leuven during the first decades of the twentieth century, but the question remains whether the Flemish nationalist historians can be considered as part of the same historiographical tradition. Before focusing on historians that were specifically educated at Leuven – highlighting the intricate connection between French-Canadian and Flemish historians – it is imperative to provide a general overview of the characteristics of Flemish (nationalist) historians of this period to illustrate the historiographical context. Two argument will be made. First, it will be argued that the Flemish nationalist historians that studied at the Catholic University of Leuven shared certain characteristics with other Flemish nationalist historians, and, as such, provides a template onto which we can broaden the scope of Flemish nationalist historians, and be able to illustrate convincingly the differentiating contexts between historians in Quebec and Flanders. Secondly, despite the shared characteristics, it will be argued that the specific context of the Catholic University of Leuven – with its emphasis on ecclesiastical history – renders the Flemish nationalist historians that had studied at the university as the most suited examples for comparison with their Quebec counterparts, and it will be illustrated how the same principles that had influenced the French-Canadian historians were also apparent in the Flemish nationalist historians, thereby leading to the conclusion that they can both be

²²⁶ See Patrick-Michel Noël, and Martin Pâquet, 'L'hexagone Et La Disciplinarisation De L'histoire Au Québec', pp. 98-112.

designated as part of a shared historiographical tradition that was simultaneously marked by Catholicism.

I.IV.I. General characteristics of the Flemish nationalist historians

I.IV.I.I. The importance of the First World War

The first element that is beneficial to highlight is that when comparing French-Canadian and Flemish historians during the interwar period, there is a significant age difference between historians of both regions. If we look at some of the most important Flemish nationalist historians – Elias, Van Roosbroeck and Picard – and compare them with the French-Canadian historians – Groulx, Lanctot and Laferrière – it becomes clear that the Flemish nationalist historians are part of a younger generation than their French-Canadian counterpart.²²⁷ While this generational divide did not affect the two regions' historiographical practices, this element can help to illustrate the importance of the First World War, and how on the one hand it constitutes a unifying trait for the Flemish nationalist historians – as they were all affected by the War – whilst simultaneously, on the other hand, constituting a differentiating factor between historians in Quebec and Flanders. During the war a schism had appeared in the national Flemish Movement, with a small section of the movement radicalizing and proclaiming the end of Belgium, and consequently Flemish independence, as their prime motive, ultimately resulting in their collaboration with the German occupier.²²⁸ In the aftermath of the war, the Belgian state would condemn these collaborators, resulting in prison sentences and forced resignations from the Belgian state bureaucracy for civil clerks that had collaborated with the German occupier.²²⁹ It is in this context of Flemish radicalization and forced resignations that we can assert a first characteristic of the Flemish nationalist historians, as it is clear that the nationalist historians active during the interwar period were to some degree affected by this context. Elias's father, a postal clerk, had been stripped from his pension rights and fired from his job for having accepted a promotion during the German occupation.²³⁰ Van Roosbroeck, who had obtained his diploma by grace of a collaborating jury, got his diploma revoked after the war, and had been fired from his position as a teacher.²³¹ Finally, Picard had started the war joining the collaboration

²²⁷ Picard is the exception, as he was born in 1888. See Lammert Buning, and Pieter Van Hees, 'Picard, Leo', in *Nieuwe Encyclopedie Van De Vlaamse Beweging*, ed. by Reginald De Schryver (Tielt: Lannoo, 1997), pp. 2472-74; Pieter-Jan Verstraete, *Hendrik Jozef Elias: Biografie* (Kortrijk: 2005); Armand Van Nimmen, 'Raakpunten Tussen Twee Journalistieke Levenslopen: Albert Van De Poel En Rob Van Roosbroeck', *Wetenschappelijke Tijdingen*, 69 (2010), pp. 199-216.

²²⁸ Lode Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, pp. 222.

²²⁹ Stijn De Wilde, and Frederik Verleden, 'Ambtenaren in Dienst Van De Vijand' De Bestraffing Van Het Activisme in De Belgische Rijksadministratie (1918-1921)', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 214 (2009), pp. 30-56.

²³⁰ Lode Wils, 'Elias of Het Gevecht Met De Democratie', *Wetenschappelijke Tijdingen*, 65 (2006), pp. 25.

²³¹ Armand Van Nimmen, 'Raakpunten tussen twee journalistieke levenslopen', pp. 204.

movement before moving to the Netherlands in 1915, after which he would maintain a delicate position with regards to the Flemish Movement, as is clear for example in his rejection to partake in the collaboration during the Second World War.²³²

The three examples of Elias, Van Roosbroeck and Picard emphasise the importance of the First World War for the Flemish nationalist historians and are crucial to highlight when comparing them with the Quebec nationalist historians. It should be noted that there was, as has been explained in the Historiography Chapter, a clear radicalization visible in French Canada as well prior and during the First World War.²³³ The tension that had arisen in Canada, with the Ontario school question the most prominent issue, had culminated in the First World War, leading to the divisive federal election of 1917, which had, similar to Flanders, caused a rift amongst French-Canadian intellectuals, with some even openly questioning the validity of the Canadian Confederation, as is clear by the motion that was put forward by Joseph-Napoléon Francoeur shortly after the election.

What is crucial to emphasize in this comparison however is the different attitude of the Belgian and Canadian state in the aftermath of the war due to the fact that a number of Flemish nationalists collaborated with the German occupier, which simultaneously stresses the geopolitical difference between the two cases. Consequently, the political context of Flemish nationalism after the war is a clear difference with the French-Canadian nationalist historians and constitutes a major factor in the comparison. Flemish nationalism was interpreted as a product of German propaganda, and as such had to be considered a danger for the unity of Belgium, as its main purpose was the dissolution of the Belgian state.²³⁴ This general perception did not only affect the bureaucracy but was also visible in the historiographical practice. In 1928 for example a group called the *National trust for Belgian unity*, under the direction of Jacques Pirenne, son of the historian Henri Pirenne, published a work titled *Bewijsstukken voor de geschiedenis van den oorlog in België: Het Archief van den Raad van Vlaanderen* [Documents for the history of the war in Belgium: the Archive of the Council of Flanders]

²³² Lammert Buning, and Pieter Van Hees, 'Picard, Leo', pp. 2472-2474. There are a number of other Flemish nationalist historians affected by the war, including Leo Delfos, who had fled Belgium during the Great War and would ultimately develop a career in Germany. See H. Wesche, 'Dr. Leo Delfos †', *Neerlandia*, 72 (1968), pp. 233-34.

²³³ See Margaret Conrad, *A Concise History of Canada*, pp. 197-199; James Kennedy, *Liberal Nationalisms*, pp. 198-201; Gordon Heath, 'The Protestant Denominational Press and the Conscription Crisis in Canada, 1917-1918', *Historical Studies*, 78 (2012), pp. 27-46.

²³⁴ To specify, in Flemish postwar historiography there has been debate on this perspective, with historians such as Elias himself arguing against this notion, instead claiming that Flemish nationalism was not the result of German propaganda, whereas historians such as Lode Wils continue to emphasize the importance of the German occupier in the genesis of Flemish nationalism. However, as this section focuses on the Belgian state and its motives for condemning the Flemish nationalists during the Great War, I do not present both viewpoints as this is not relevant in this section. For more, see Tollebeek, 'Historiografie'.

which published the documents relating to the collaborating Flemish nationalist organization the Council of Flanders. Giving an overview of the last months of the war, the authors stated that

As the activist movement had been defeated, Germany was not able to pursue its plans to dissolve Belgium in accordance with the “right of the conqueror”. It was however confident to reap the benefits of its Flemish politics and use the activist movement to break up Belgium and pursue a continued stream of pangermanic propaganda.²³⁵

These plans for future propaganda however were, as indicated by the authors, thwarted by the “victorious attack”, but what is important to note about this assessment is that Flemish nationalism was considered a German construction, and as such an unnatural element that could not be compared to other national movements. The authors made this point clear in their introduction, explaining that “foreign papers, scientific journals often analyse Flemish nationalism, and it is regularly portrayed as being of the same calibre as the nationalist urge in Czechoslovakia, Ireland or Poland. [...] The attempt to form a State (or Kingdom) of Flanders, separate from Belgium, started during the war, with the collaboration.”²³⁶ By positing the origins of Flemish nationalism in the war, and making it closely related to German propaganda, the authors presented Flemish nationalism, and its proponents, as an anomaly in the wide spectrum of national movements. Moreover, because it was represented as a German ploy to break up the Belgian state, it was concluded that it had to be rejected in its entirety, as has been clear by the large amount of resignations and prison sentences that the Belgian state had executed after the war, so as to eradicate this German-inspired strand of Flemish nationalism. It is this conception of Flemish nationalism by proponents of the Belgian state, in addition to the personal experiences of the Flemish nationalist historians during and after the war, that constitutes a first characteristic to keep in mind when assessing not only the practices of Flemish nationalist historians, but also its differences with their French-Canadian counterparts.

I.IV.I.II. The law of 1890

An important issue that arises when analysing Flemish historiography, and the intricate practices of the Flemish nationalist historians, is the divergence in political and nationalist opinions and interpretations that were prevalent in this period.²³⁷ In the aftermath of the Great War, a wide spectrum of different nationalist perspectives had arisen in the Flemish Movement, ranging from a

²³⁵ Ligue nationale pour l'unité belge, *Het Archief van den Raad van Vlaanderen*, (Brussels: Dewarichet, 1929), pp. 68-69. Also see A. Wullus-Rudiger, *Flamenpolitik. Supreme Espoir Allemand De Domination En Belgique* (1921).

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 1.

²³⁷ See the Historiography Chapter.

status quo in the Belgian state to an independent Flanders.²³⁸ In this complex historiographical and political context, it seems difficult to ascertain certain markers so as to constitute a coherent group of historians that can be compared to the French-Canadian context. One such marker could be the Flemish collaboration of the Second World War, so as to limit the group of Flemish nationalist historians to those that collaborated (such as Elias or Van Roosbroeck). Taking this marker as an indicator however immediately poses problems, as is clear by the examples of the historians Leo Delfos and Leo Picard. Picard, as seen earlier, had joined the activist movement during the First World War before moving to the Netherlands, and Delfos had been stripped of his civil rights after the war, despite having (voluntarily) joined the Belgian army at the beginning of the war.²³⁹ These two historians who played an important role in Flemish nationalist historiography during the interwar period – Picard published his seminal work *Geschiedenis van de Vlaamse en Groot-Nederlandse Beweging* [History of the Flemish and Great-Netherlands movement] in 1937, and Delfos made a lasting contribution to the historiography of the sixteenth century by discovering and publishing the original charter of the Union of Utrecht in 1933 – did not collaborate during the Second World War, thus making the initial marker unfeasible when analysing and assessing Flemish nationalist historiography during this period, and comparing it with the French-Canadian historians.²⁴⁰

Another element however can be perceived as a general characteristic of Flemish historians during this period and can help to frame the group of Flemish nationalist historians: the law of 1890 that organized and defined the demands of the historical discipline. As seen before, the law was of crucial importance for the structure and organization of the *Séminaire historique* at the University of Leuven and was influential to historians such as Laferrière or Langlois. In a similar vein the law of 1890 can be considered as a crucial element in the training and formation of Flemish nationalist historians and can help to tie together the complex plethora of different Flemish nationalist historians. First of all, the law of 1890 is a first indication of the similarities between the Flemish and French-Canadian historians that had studied at Leuven or had experienced the changes in the historical discipline set forward by the law. Both Flemish historians such as Elias and Picard and French-Canadian historians such as Laferrière and Langlois were affected by the changes in the historical discipline that had occurred during the last decade of the nineteenth century and can thus be considered as a shared

²³⁸ See Louis Vos, 'The Flemish National Question', pp. 83-109; Marnix Beyen, and Benoît Majerus, 'Weak and Strong Nations in the Low Countries. National Historiography in the Low Countries: National Historiography and Its "Others" in Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in *The Contested Nation: Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories*, ed. by Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz (New York: Palgrave, 2008), pp. 290.

²³⁹ H. Wesche, 'Dr. Leo Delfos †', pp. 233-234.

²⁴⁰ Jo Tollebeek, 'Historiografie', pp. 121; H. Wesche, 'Dr. Leo Delfos', pp. 234.

characteristic of Flemish and French-Canadian historians. Secondly, the law of 1890 led to a homogenization of the Belgian historians which consequently affected the Flemish nationalist historians as well, as they received their historical formation at the Belgian universities.²⁴¹ Because the law had been formalized at all universities in Belgium, the emphasis on historical methodology and the scientific norms that were demanded of historians – the thesis as prime element – was shared amongst all universities, and thus allows us to see this characteristic as an element that was shared by all Flemish nationalist historians. Leo Picard for example had studied history at the non-denominational University of Ghent under the tutelage of Henri Pirenne, whereas Elias had studied at the Catholic University of Leuven, thus comprising at first glance two different universities with a different outlook. The law of 1890 however had standardized the historical education, as is clear by the fact Elias, just as Laferrière, had written a thesis, just as Picard would have, were it not that he had to stop his education due to the First World War.²⁴² The law of 1890, which had standardized the historical training and formation at the Belgian universities, can thus be considered as a general characteristic of the Flemish nationalist historians of the interwar period, and allows us to frame the complex array of Flemish nationalist historians in a historiographical context.

However, it should be noted that despite this shared characteristic resulting from the law of 1890, the possibility remained for different universities to specialize or emphasise specific themes or subjects in history. Consequently, regardless of the shared methodological formation, universities in Belgium could still differentiate based on their area of expertise. In this sense, Kurth's remark that "for religious history as a speciality, the University of Louvain stands as an important centre today" has to be considered as an indication of this differentiation, and helps to explain why the Flemish nationalist historians that had studied at Leuven can be considered as part of a larger historiographical context, whilst simultaneously being influenced by the specific historiographical and philosophical context of the Catholic University of Leuven.²⁴³ This can be further highlighted by the final element, the intrinsic international nature of the historical discipline during this period, and the specific context of the Catholic network in which the Catholic University of Leuven played a vital role.

1.IV.1.III. Academic mobility and transnational networks

Similar to the French-Canadian students and historians that had crossed the Atlantic to study in Europe, Flemish nationalist historians would constitute a mobile group during the first half of the twentieth century. Leo Delfos for example, as one of the exceptions to being influenced by the law of

²⁴¹ Leen Dorsman, 'De Nieuwe Eruditie', pp. 168-170.

²⁴² Lammert Buning, and Pieter Van Hees, 'Picard, Leo', pp. 2472-2474

²⁴³ E. Ned, *L'énergie belge*, Brussels (1906), pp. 76.

1890, obtained his historical degree at the university of Gottingen in 1923.²⁴⁴ Delfos' example immediately highlights two crucial elements that help to frame the analysis of the Flemish nationalist historians. First, the example indicates the importance of the neighbouring countries for the development of Flemish nationalist historiography during this period, and constitutes a geopolitical difference with the French-Canadian nationalist historians. It should be noted that Quebec nationalist historians did have networks that reached into other Canadian provinces and the United States, but this was not as extensive as the foreign influence and support received by Flemish nationalists and historians.²⁴⁵ The historian Robert Van Roosbroeck for example had obtained a research grant to travel and study in Germany, where he would establish contacts with the German cultural historian Franz Petri, whose Pan-Germanic views would remain influential to Van Roosbroeck, and who would play a key role in the German occupation of Belgium during the Second World War.²⁴⁶ In addition, the historiographical movement of *Greater-Netherlands*, which interpreted the history of the Low Countries based on the linguistic and racial convergence of Flanders and the Netherlands, played an influential role on a number of Flemish nationalist historians, including Hendrik Elias and Leo Picard.²⁴⁷

Secondly, the prevalence of the neighbouring countries on Flemish nationalist historiography highlights the intrinsically international and dispersed nature of Flemish nationalist historiography during this period. In addition to the *Greater-Netherlandish* example, the Catholic network would prove influential to the Flemish nationalist historians that had studied at the Catholic University of Leuven. Hendrik Elias for example, with support of the Universitaire Stichting [University Foundation] and minister of education Camille Huysmans, would move to Rome where he would conduct research at the *Belgian Historical Institute* for eight months in 1926, after which he would travel to Paris and Luxembourg and attend one semester at the University of Bonn before returning to Belgium, where he would ultimately obtain a second degree in law in 1929.²⁴⁸ What Elias's example illustrates is the existence of different networks that could coalesce, even between the Belgian and Flemish levels,

²⁴⁴ H. Wesche, 'Dr. Leo Delfos', pp. 234.

²⁴⁵ See Damien-Claude Bélanger, 'L'abbé Lionel Groulx Et La Crise Sentinelliste', *Mens: Revue d'histoire intellectuelle de l'Amérique française*, 11 (2000), pp. 7-36;

²⁴⁶ Armand Van Nimmen, *Rob van Roosbroeck en Tijdgenoten: het Verdriet van Vlaanderen*, (Ghent: Academia Press: 2014), pp. 63-116.

²⁴⁷ For more on the Great-Netherlandish movement, see P.B.M. Blaas, 'De Visie Van De Groot-Nederlandse Historiografen: Aanleiding Tot Een Nieuwe Historiografie?', in *1585: Op Gescheiden Wegen...: Handelingen Van Het Colloquium over De Scheiding Der Nederlanden, Gehouden Op 22-23 November 1985 Te Brussel*, ed. by Jan Craeybeckx, F. Daeleman and F.G. Scheelings (Leuven: 1988), pp. 197-218; Bruno De Wever, 'Groot-Nederland Als Utopie En Mythe', *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Eigentijdse Geschiedenis*, 3 (1997), pp. 163-80; Lode Wils, 'De Groot-Nederlandse Beweging', *Wetenschappelijke Tijdingen*, 64 (2005), pp. 23-34; Lode Wils, 'De Grootnederlandse Geschiedschrijving', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 61 (1983), pp. 322-66.

²⁴⁸ Bruno de Wever, 'Hendrik Elias: Historicus in de politiek,' in Martin, Dirk and Colignon, Alain (eds.), *België: een maatschappij in crisis en oorlog, 1940*, (Brussels: Centre de recherches et d'études historiques de la seconde guerre mondiale, 1993), pp. 329; Lode Wils, 'Elias of het gevecht met de democratie', pp. 27.

despite the apparent political tensions in Belgium during this period. However, historians that had been enrolled in the Catholic University of Leuven had the benefit of being part of the Catholic network – of which the French-Canadian nationalist historians were part too – and, as such, constitute the most suited examples to compare with the Quebec case, whilst simultaneously allowing to broaden and generalize certain characteristics or practices that were shared amongst Flemish nationalist historians. In what follows then, it is beneficial to analyse how exactly the specificity of the Catholic University of Leuven helped to influence and form a number of prominent Flemish nationalist historians.

I.IV.II. Flemish historians at Leuven

In analysing the importance and influence of the historical formation on the Flemish nationalist historians at the Catholic University of Leuven, it is crucial to make clear which historians are chosen to provide the most illustrating comparison with the French-Canadian historians and context. Similar to the French-Canadian case, there were a number of prominent figures in the Flemish Movement that were enrolled at the Catholic University of Leuven, and that, to some degree, had followed historical and methodological courses during their time at the university. The lawyer Jan Brans for example, who had published a historical work called *Het Dietsche bewustzijn in Zuid-Nederland* [The Dietsch consciousness in the Southern Netherlands] in 1937, explained that “the historical development of the Southern Netherlands” had fascinated him since “my student years, first at the school of Sint-Truiden, and later at the University of Leuven”, indicating an influence of history and the historical discipline during his years at the university, as is clear, in addition, to the fact that the aforementioned historian Victor Brants also taught at the Faculty of Law.²⁴⁹ However, to emphasise the comparison and similarities with the French-Canadian case, it is beneficial to analyse the Flemish nationalists that, just as Laferrière, pursued a doctorate in the historical science, meaning that they took up the historical courses being taught and finalized their formation with a doctoral thesis. Consequently, two historians – Hendrik Elias and Rob Van Roosbroeck – will, in accordance with the concentric historiographical approach, constitute the centre of the analysis that will highlight the similarities between the cases, and as such can be considered as the prime examples of a larger group that had been influenced by the ecclesiastical and methodological principles taught at the Catholic University of Leuven. Similar to the French-Canadian case, the analysis will focus on the importance and influence of certain professors, the courses that both historians had to take up and finally the historians’ doctoral theses, which will illustrate how the historians were influenced by the same

²⁴⁹ Jan Brans, *Het Dietsche Bewustzijn in Zuid-Nederland. Bijdrage Tot De Geschiedenis Der Zuidelijke Nederlanden* (Antwerp: Volksuniversiteit Herman Van den Reek, 1937), pp. 5; *Annuaire De L'universite Catholique De Louvain: 71ere Annee*, (Leuven: Vanlinthout, 1908), pp. 84-85.

ecclesiastical and methodological principles as their French-Canadian counterparts, and can be considered as part of the same historiographical tradition.

I.IV.II.I. History Professors influential to the Flemish historians

A first element to highlight is the influence of the professors at the Catholic University of Leuven on Elias and Van Rosbroeck, as it will become clear that the professors that proved influential on Laferrière and the other French-Canadians were also instrumental in the historical formation of the Flemish nationalist historians. The first person to emphasise is the Catholic historian Alfred Cauchie. The historian, who was instrumental in the origin and completion of Laferrière's doctoral thesis, also contributed to the genesis of Elias' thesis. Elias, who had started his historical formation in 1919, had come under the tutelage of Cauchie to prepare his doctoral thesis, which, in line with the ecclesiastical and methodological principles that dominated the Catholic University of Leuven during this period, focused on ecclesiastical aspects of the Low Countries in the sixteenth century, and was called *Kerk en staat in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden onder de regeering der aartshertogen Albrecht en Isabella (1598-1621)* [Church and State in de Southern Netherlands during the reigns of archdukes Albrecht and Isabella (1598-1621)].²⁵⁰ Before Elias could complete his thesis however Cauchie would pass away in 1921, which meant that Leo Van der Essen who, as we have seen before, had completed his own thesis under the guidance of Cauchie and had at first become the historian's teaching assistant, would become Elias' supervisor for the remainder of the Flemish historian's historical formation.²⁵¹

Van der Essen would prove to be an important influence on the Flemish historians, including Elias and Van Rosbroeck, during the following decades, and as such can be considered, due to his own tutelage under Cauchie, as the continuation of the ecclesiastical and methodological principles that had prevailed at the Catholic University of Leuven since the last decade of the nineteenth century. One element is, as seen earlier, his involvement in the preparation and completion of the Flemish historians' doctoral thesis, so as to convey the *Séminaire historique's* methodological principles. In addition to Elias, Van der Essen had guided Van Rosbroeck – who had been able to resume his historical studies thanks to Van der Essen – to complete his doctoral thesis, and played a crucial role in the genesis of the doctoral thesis of the Flemish writer and historian Albert Goris [Marnix Gijsen], as indicated by one reviewer who explained how “moreover, he [Gijsen] has had the chance of being able to use the findings of his supervisor, M. L. Van der Essen, professor at the University of Leuven, in the Archives of Farnese in Naples and Parma on the economic history of the Low Countries in the

²⁵⁰ Hendrik Elias, *Kerk En Staat in De Zuidelijke Nederlanden Onder De Regeering Der Aartshertogen Albrecht En Isabella (1598-1621)* (Antwerp: De Sikkel, 1931).

²⁵¹ Joris Dedeurwaerder, 'Een mens van vlees en bloed...?', pp. 250.

sixteenth century.”²⁵² The examples of Van der Essen’s involvement in the genesis and completion of a number of Flemish historians’ doctoral theses show how the Belgian Catholic historian had taken up an important role at the *Séminaire* after the death of his mentor Alfred Cauchie, and show how Van der Essen would be of crucial importance to the Flemish nationalist historians in the following decades.

Moreover, Van der Essen’s connection to the Flemish historians is not limited to the historians’ doctoral thesis, but is also illustrated by his involvement in Flemish historical projects and institutions that are set up by these historians during the interwar period. A first example is Van der Essen’s role in the creation of the Vlaamsche Geschiedkundige Kring [Flemish historical society], a student organization at the University of Leuven founded by the history students Hendrik Elias, Jan-Albert Goris and Jan De Cuyper in the early 1920s and which serves as an early indication of Van der Essen’s continued involvement in the Flemish historiographical developments of the interwar period.²⁵³ The most illustrative example of Van der Essen’s influence on the Flemish nationalist historians can be found in his role and contribution to the genesis and creation of the multivolume *Geschiedenis van Vlaanderen* [History of Flanders] first published in 1936 with Van Roosbroeck as main editor. Van der Essen, himself a specialist of medieval history, had contributed to the first volume of the series, with a section entitled *History of the Middle Ages from the end of the sixth until the thirteenth century*.²⁵⁴ Moreover, Van der Essen’s contribution, in addition to other Flemish historians working at Ghent University (Frans-Louis Ganshof and Hans van Werveke) was of crucial importance to legitimate the undertaking of writing a Flemish national history in addition to the established Belgian national framework – symbolized by Henri Pirenne’s *Histoire de Belgique*.²⁵⁵ We can thus assess Van der Essen’s role not only as influential in the formation of the Flemish nationalist historians studying at the Catholic University of Leuven, but also in the development of their historical careers and foundations of historical institutes that would contribute to the development of Flemish (nationalist) historiography during the interwar period. That is however, until the Second World War, when Van der Essen would distance himself from the collaborating Flemish nationalist historians – including Van Roosbroeck and Elias – as would other Flemish historians such as Ganshof and Werveke. Strikingly, Van Roosbroeck was no longer part of the editorial staff when the last volume of the *History of Flanders* was published in 1949, nor was he, or Elias, invited to write a piece for the joint Belgian-

²⁵² Armand Van Nimmen, *Rob van Roosbroeck en Tijdgenoten*, pp. 50-51; H. Vander Linden, 'J. A. Goris. Étude Sur Les Colonies Marchandes Méridionales (Portugais, Espagnols, Italiens) À Anvers De 1488 À 1567', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 6 (1927), pp. 878.

²⁵³ Karel De Busschere, 'In Memoriam Jan De Cuyper (1895-1981)', *Gezellenkroniek*, 16 (1982), pp. 11-17; G.P.M. Knuvelder, 'Toespraak Tot J. De Cuyper', *Gezellenkroniek*, 12 (1977), pp. 8-9.

²⁵⁴ Rob Van Roosbroeck, *Geschiedenis Van Vlaanderen*. Vol. 1 (Antwerp: Standaard Uitgeverij, 1936), pp. 113-276.

²⁵⁵ Marnix Beyen, *Oorlog en verleden*, pp. 436-437.

Dutch work *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* [General History of the Low Countries] whose first volume was published in 1949 as well and to which Van der Essen, Ganshof and Van Werveke had all contributed.²⁵⁶

Next to Van der Essen, we can discern several other professors that were influential to both the French-Canadian and Flemish historians during the first half of the twentieth century, and that indicate the continued influence of the ecclesiastical and methodological principles that were fundamental to the historical training at the university. Lodewijk Scharpé for example, who had been a part of Laferrière's jury during his public defence, continued to teach his Germanic and philological classes until 1935, just as Paul-Jozef Sencie, a priest-historian who taught the political history of the Antiquity and gave a practical course on historical critique during Laferrière's years up until his retirement in 1939 (See Appendix 4).²⁵⁷ What these examples, in addition to the importance of Van der Essen, show is that we can assess a clear continuation of the ecclesiastical and methodological principles that had been prevalent in the first decade of the twentieth century and were influential to the French-Canadian students, into the interwar period. Consequently, these principles would also play an important role for the Flemish nationalist historians despite the death of some of the professors – most prominently Alfred Cauchie and Charles Moeller – that had been influential during the foundation and organization of the *Séminaire historique* during the last decade of the nineteenth century.

I.IV.II.II. Courses

Similar to the French-Canadians that had studied at the Catholic University of Leuven, the Flemish nationalist historians were influenced by the ecclesiastical and methodological principles that had been apparent from the foundation and organization of the historical degree during the last decade of the nineteenth century. One example to prove this point is the course *Historische Kritiek* [Historical Critique] that was taught by Van der Essen during the interwar years, and that shows the continuation of the principles that we have discerned in the French-Canadian cases. Laferrière's distinction between external and internal critique as the basis to assess the authenticity of the historical sources can be found in Van der Essen's courses as well, as he explains in the section called "Origin and authenticity critique" that "it answers the question: Who, where and when was the source written?" further specifying that there are "external criteria: not to be found in the source itself" and "internal criteria", thus showing how Van der Essen conceived and taught the methodological principles of the historical

²⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 439; Beyen, 'Natural-Born Nations?', pp. 56-58.

²⁵⁷ W. Peremans, 'Sencie, Pieter Jozef', in *Nationaal Biografisch Woordenboek* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1974), pp. 858.

discipline in a similar fashion as Laferrière was taught and subsequently professed in his fifteen theorems.²⁵⁸ Moreover, the symbiosis between ecclesiastical and methodological principles that were apparent from Laferrière's education are present in the same work taught by Van der Essen. This is clear for example in Van der Essen's description of the existence of miracles in history, just as Laferrière had posited during his doctoral defence.

Similar to Laferrière, Van der Essen criticized those that "ignore the miracle and posit the impossibility of it", explaining that "it should be considered – from a historical-critical point of view – as a simple fact." Van der Essen, just as Laferrière, believed on the one hand that a miracle, contrary to the critics, did not constitute a metaphysical element, but was essentially a historical fact that could be recorded and transmitted via historical sources, after which, he explained, "only the clerical authorities can judge whether for example a healing is miraculous. The historian is not authorized nor capable to do this", indicating once again a clear overlap between the ecclesiastical and historical principles, since the historian is able to validate miracles as historical facts, but not authorized to judge whether the fact is a miracle or not.²⁵⁹ On the other hand, Van der Essen's criticism of those that deem a miracle in history an impossibility, which, he explained, "is proof of an unscientific mind", are in line with the general conception of history as a scientific discipline, as stated by Laferrière as well.²⁶⁰ By arguing that historians are able to judge whether a certain miracle could be considered a historical fact, Van der Essen granted a scientific stature to the historical discipline, as it was able, just as the exact sciences, to discern facts so as to make general (objective) statements on history. This however did not mean, as could be argued, that Van der Essen interpreted history – like the exact sciences – as a completely objective science. In a similar fashion as Laferrière, Van der Essen explained that

There are those that concern themselves with the philosophy of history. This is however untenable because history changes incessantly. In history, unlike some would suggest, it is not possible to ascertain general recurrent laws. This is unlike the exact sciences where after for example an experiment in the lab, there is a 100/100 chance that the same fact will again show the same reaction. For history, the impossibility to determine such laws is proven by the following arguments:

1. Every historical book will become outdated after a certain period because they will always find new documents that make previous statements obsolete.
2. The interpretations are very diverse and are changing constantly.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Leo Van der Essen, *Historische Kritiek*, pp. 23-24.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 23.

²⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 45.

It is important to note that this assessment of history as constantly changing which subsequently made it impossible to discern general laws was not only shared amongst Laferrière and Van der Essen, but was also apparent amongst the Flemish nationalist historians. Elias for example, in an almost identical way, stated that history can be considered as a “continuous process of construction and demolition”, explaining that

A new generation sees history from a different perspective than its predecessor, because it understands life differently and gives an alternate meaning to the different sections of human being and becoming. [...] every science is bound to the necessary developments of her essence and of the human mind itself. Contrary to the exact sciences, which can formulate the intricate connections between experimentally established phenomena into fixed laws, this feat is impossible in history. This is not only because history is a regressive science, but also because it is essentially subjective.²⁶²

Elias’s characterization of history as a continuous process in which it is impossible – contrary to the exact sciences – to discern general laws can thus be seen as similar to both Laferrière’s and Van der Essen’s concept of history and the untenability of complete objectivity in the historical discipline, and indicates how historians of both Flanders and French-Canada shared a similar interpretation of history that could be related to the ecclesiastical and methodological principles that were crucial at the Catholic University of Leuven, and was conveyed to the students not only via the professors themselves, but also through the courses they taught. Consequently, due to this shared characterization of history by historians in Quebec and Flanders, this element will be further analysed in Chapter III, and it will be argued that this specific conceptualization can be related to the philosophy of neo-Thomism that played a prominent role at the Catholic University of Leuven during this period.

I.IV.II.III. Theses

As the course outline for the historical degree stated, a student had to complete his education by writing a thesis that dealt with a historical subject.²⁶³ Similar to Laferrière’s case, the doctoral theses written by Elias and Van Roosbroeck can be considered as a reflection of the historical formation they received during their years at the university, and can be seen as an example of the symbiosis of the ecclesiastical and methodological principles that were crucial in the historiographical context of the Catholic University of Leuven. An exception to this rule, and an indication that the historiography in this period comprised of more than one clear set of methodology or field of study, is Jan-Albert Goris’ thesis. Goris’ thesis, titled *Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (Portugais, Espagnols, Italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567. Contribution à l’histoire des débuts du capitalisme moderne*, was,

²⁶² Hendrik Elias, *Het nationaal gevoel in de Nederlandsche historische liederen der 16de eeuw*, (Antwerp: Drukkerij De Vos-Van Kleef, 1926), pp. 323-324.

²⁶³ See Section I.III.II.I.

contrary to the other works discussed here, a thesis on economic and social history, discussing the importance of Antwerp in the development of capitalism in the sixteenth century. As Goris himself explained, “the emerging capitalism had his initial problems here [in Antwerp]: it succeeded in legitimating itself in front of the sovereigns due to the circumstances.”²⁶⁴ Goris’ emphasis on the origins and development of capitalism in sixteenth-century Antwerp can thus be considered as different from the traditional ecclesiastical themes that have been discussed with regards to the Catholic University of Leuven, but it can still be considered as part of the larger Belgian historiographical context that was related to the work of the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne. It is interesting to note for example that a number of reviewers make an explicit reference to Pirenne to frame Goris’ work, which gives an indication of Pirenne’s influence on this subsection of Belgian historiography during the first half of the twentieth century and should be briefly explained.²⁶⁵

Henri Pirenne, author of the seminal *Histoire de Belgique*, can be considered as one of the most important figures of the Belgian historiography of the first half of the twentieth century, and it is crucial to understand this historian and his historiographical practice as this helps to frame Gijsen’s work, and helps to highlight the complexity and diversity of the Belgian historiographical practice, of which the ecclesiastical historiography essential to the Catholic University of Leuven was only one part.²⁶⁶ The importance of Pirenne to the Flemish historiography in relation to Gijsen’s doctoral thesis is via the Belgian historian’s role in introducing urban and social-economic themes to the Belgian historiography of the first half of the twentieth century, particularly at the University of Ghent.²⁶⁷ Moreover, scholars have emphasised Pirenne’s involvement in the foundation of the *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, the French seminal historical journal that, in the words of the famous French historians Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, was “a periodical of economic and social history.”²⁶⁸ This emphasis on social and economic history propagated by Pirenne had a direct influence on Flemish historiography. Graduate students of Pirenne, including Louis Ganshof and Hans Van Werveke, would continue to expand on Belgian social-economic history, as is clear for example by Van Werveke’s work

²⁶⁴ Jan-Albert Goris, *Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (Portugais, Espagnols, Italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567*, (Leuven: Librairie universitaire, 1925), pp. iv.

²⁶⁵ Marcel Bataillon, 'Etude Sur Les Colonies Marchandes Méridionales (Portugais, Espagnols, Italiens) À Anvers De 1488 À 1567 [Compte Rendu]', *Bulletin Hispanique* 28 (1926), pp. 290-296; Paul-Marie Bondonio, 'Etude Sur Les Colonies Marchandes Méridionales À Anvers De 1488 À 1567 Par J.-A. Goris', *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 87 (1926), pp. 188-89.

²⁶⁶ Henri Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, (Brussels: Lamertin, 1902).

²⁶⁷ Walter Prevenier, '«Ceci N'est Pas Un Historien». Construction and Deconstruction of Henri Pirenne', *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis*, 41 (2011), pp. 553-73.

²⁶⁸ Marc Bloch, and Lucien Febvre, 'À Nos Lecteurs', *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* 1(1929), pp. 1; For Pirenne’s involvement in the journal, see Bryce Lyon, and Mary Lyon, *The Birth of Annales History: The Letters of Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch to Henry Pirenne (1921-1935)* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1991).

published in 1941 entitled *Brugge en Antwerpen, acht eeuwen Vlaamsche handel* [Bruges and Antwerp: eight centuries of Flemish trade] or Ganshof's *Brugge als wereldhaven* [Bruges as a global port] published in 1939.²⁶⁹ It is in this context of emerging emphasis on social-economic history that we can assess Pirenne's influence on historiography and posit Gijsen's thesis as part of this emerging subsection of Belgian/Flemish historiography.

Contrary to Gijsen, Elias and Van Roosbroeck would each write and complete a doctoral thesis that can be considered as examples of the ecclesiastical emphasis that had been prevalent at the Catholic University of Leuven. Elias's thesis, as seen earlier, focused on the late sixteenth-century Archdukes Albrecht and Isabella, and the connection between the State and the Church during their reign, which took place immediately after the separation of the Low Countries in a Spanish controlled Spanish Netherlands (or Southern Netherlands) and an independent republic called the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands.²⁷⁰ In particular, Elias analysed, as the Belgian historian Paul Harsin explained in his review, "the history of the connection between the Church and the State in the Low countries during the reign of the archdukes", specifying that "the first part of the book shows us the involvement the Church had in the realisation of the State's programme. The second part shows us the counterpart of that collaboration: the intervention of the State in ecclesiastical affairs."²⁷¹ What is clear in Harsin's assessment of Elias' doctoral thesis is the prominence of ecclesiastical history, as Elias sought to analyse the interchanges between the state and the church in a period of Low Countries history that is marked by religious disputes, as the end of sixteenth century, and the Dutch Revolt, were marked by a stark contrast between Catholicism and Protestantism.²⁷² This emphasis on the religious quarrels in the sixteenth century can also be traced back in Van Roosbroeck's doctoral thesis, which focused on the same period, and is entitled *Het wonderjaar te Antwerpen (1566- 1567). Inleiding tot de studie der godsdienstonlusten te Antwerpen van 1566 tot 1585* [The 'glorious year' in Antwerp (1566-1567). Introduction to the study of the religious animosities in Antwerp from 1566 until 1585].²⁷³ The work, as indicated by the title, put emphasis on the religious quarrels in the Low Countries during the second half of the sixteenth century, and in particular, as explained by the French historian Émile Coornaert

²⁶⁹ Hans Van Werveke, *Brugge En Antwerpen, Acht Eeuwen Vlaamsche Handel* (Ghent: Rombaut-Fecheyr, 1941); Louis Ganshof, *Brugge Als Wereldhaven* (Antwerp: Boekdrukk. Van Uffelen en Delagarde, 1939).

²⁷⁰ See Geert Janssen, *The Dutch Revolt and Catholic Exile in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 129-179.

²⁷¹ Paul Harsin, 'Elias (H. J.), Kerk En Staat in De Zuidelijke Nederlanden Onder De Regeering Der Aartshertogen Albrecht En Isabella (1598-1621)', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 12 (1933), pp. 257.

²⁷² Geert Janssen, *The Dutch Revolt and Catholic Exile*, pp. 129-179.

²⁷³ Rob Van Roosbroeck, *Het Wonderjaar Te Antwerpen 1566-1567: Inleiding Tot De Studie Der Godsdienstonlusten Te Antwerpen Van 1566 Tot 1585* (Antwerp: De Sikkels, 1930).

the organisation and propaganda of the protestant confessions, the pacifying politics of the [Duke of] Orange, the contacts between the Reformers in Antwerp and Germany and, exceptionally, France, the great effort undertaken by them to buy their religious liberty, and the subsequent prohibition to preach, the armed resistance that was broken up at the Battle of Oosterweel, and the reconciliation with the regent just before the arrival of the [Duke of] Alba.²⁷⁴

What Coornaert's assessment of Van Roosbroeck's doctoral thesis illustrates is an emphasis on the sixteenth-century ecclesiastical context of the Low Countries and, similar to Elias, the interchanges between the State and Church during this period. Moreover, the reviews of both historians' doctoral theses indicate two other elements. First, they indicate once more how students of history at the Catholic University of Leuven adhered to the methodological normative demands of the historical discipline, as is clear by the reviewers' assessment of both works. The authoritative French historian Henri Hauser for example, who had written extensively on the sixteenth century, lauded Van Roosbroeck's doctoral thesis, explaining that "an excellent bibliography which is worth consulting, shows that the author has almost read everything on the subject. He thus complements the anterior works by taking as centre of focus the great city which figured prominently in the intellectual, religious and economic crises in the Low Countries [during this period]."²⁷⁵

Moreover, the reviews by established French historians (such as Hauser and Émile Coornaert) show, secondly, how the Flemish historians were not an isolated group, but were part of a growing international community of historians.²⁷⁶ The foundation of the International Committee of the Historical Sciences in Brussels in 1923 for example (in which Pirenne played an important role) is an indication of a growing international practice that standardized the normative framework for the historical discipline, and the Flemish historians can be considered a part of this changing context, as is clear in the reviews of their doctoral theses by well-established French historians.²⁷⁷ Elias' and Van Roosbroeck's doctoral theses can thus be considered as examples of the larger tradition we have analysed, and of which Laferrière and the other French-Canadian students were a part as well. In addition to the ecclesiastical and methodological principles, the case of Gijzen has highlighted a different subsection of the interwar Belgian historiographical practice, and the role of Pirenne, both in the growing emphasis on social-economic history and the foundation of international historical

²⁷⁴ Émile Coornaert, 'Van Roosbroeck (Dr Rob.) — Het Wonderjaar Te Antwerpen (1566- 1567). Inleiding Tot De Studie Der Godsdienstonlusten Te Antwerpen Van 1566 Tot 1585', *Revue du Nord* 17 (1931), pp. 326.

²⁷⁵ Henri Hauser, 'Het Wonderjaar Te Antwerpen 1566-1567. « De Sikkels » by Rob. Van Roosbroeck Review', *Revue Historique*, 167 (1931), pp. 159; For more on Hauser, see Séverine-Antigone Marin, and Georges-Henri Soutou, *Henri Hauser (1866-1946): Humaniste, Historien, Républicain* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2006).

²⁷⁶ See Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *Toward a Global Community of Historians: The International Historical Congresses and the International Committee of Historical Sciences 1898-2000* (New York: Beghan Books, 2005).

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-121.

communities, shows how when assessing and analysing Flemish interwar historiography, it is imperative to consider Pirenne's position and influence in addition to the historiographical context of the Catholic University of Leuven.

I.V. Conclusion

In this chapter, two major arguments have been made. First, it has been argued that the Catholic University of Leuven can be considered as part of a Catholic network that was instrumental in the formation of nationalist historians in both Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century. By illustrating how Quebec and Flemish historians both profited from a network that provided the institutional means necessary to pursue their research and academic interests, it has become possible to designate both groups as part of a shared network that played an important role in the historiographical practices in both cases. Despite Elias' comment on how "after the war the scientific [Flemish] historiography had begun to assess history from its own viewpoint and language", Flemish historiography in the interwar period was rooted in the Belgian historiographical context, as has been clear by the numerous examples of Flemish historians studying at the Belgian universities during this period.²⁷⁸ Understanding this inextricable relation between the Flemish and Belgian historiography – and institutions – is crucial when comparing it to the French-Canadian case, as the French-Canadian historians had, compared to their Flemish counterparts, a more liberated connection with the English-Canadian context, and will be further analysed in Chapter III and IV, as it constitutes an important difference between the two cases.

Secondly, it has become apparent that the Catholic University of Leuven constituted a specific historical formation, in which the symbiosis of ecclesiastical history with the methodological innovations in the historical discipline resulted in a particular historiographical practice that proved influential to historians in both Quebec and Flanders. By illustrating how historians in Quebec and Flanders were influenced by the same Belgian Catholic historians, it has become possible to designate both cases as part of a shared historiographical practice in which Catholicism and ecclesiastical history figured prominently. In the following chapter, it will be argued that this shared historiographical practice as taught at the Catholic University of Leuven was profoundly marked by the philosophy of neo-Thomism, which will provide new insights into the complex interplay between nationalism, religion and historiography that constituted the historiographical practice in both Quebec and Flanders. Moreover, this shared neo-Thomist influence allows us to re-assess certain traditional portrayals of the historiography in both cases, and can shed new light on certain historiographical

²⁷⁸ Hendrik Elias, *De Geschiedenis Der Nederlanden. Nieuwe Richtingen En Inzichten. Offprint from Dietsche Warande En Belfort* (1931), pp. 15.

dilemmas that have occurred in the analysis of the two cases. The question then that will be addressed in the following chapter is what constituted neo-Thomism at the Catholic University of Leuven during this period, and its influence and relevance to the historiographical practices in Quebec and Flanders.

Chapter II. Essence and Existence: the importance of neo-Thomist philosophy on Flemish and Quebec historiography

This chapter will explore the influence of the neo-Thomist philosophy on the Flemish and French-Canadian historiography of the early twentieth century. First, I will argue that the historiographical

connection between Flanders and Quebec, as established in the previous chapter, was profoundly marked by the neo-Thomist philosophy which had an enormous influence at the Catholic University of Leuven during this time. I will focus on three of the main proponents of the philosophy that were active at the University during this time – Désiré Mercier, Désiré Nys, and Maurice de Wulf – and will show how the writings of all three can be traced back to a number of Quebec Catholic historians, thereby illustrating the influence of the neo-Thomist philosophy. Secondly, I will highlight how the core argument of the (neo) Thomist philosophy – the idea that essence and existence are interdependent – played a vital role in the framing and conceptualization of nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders during this period. Using Désiré Nys' neo-Thomist perceptions of cosmology and chemistry as a case study, I will highlight how both history and chemistry from a neo-Thomist perspective emphasized the core element of the philosophy in a similar fashion, showing not only how nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders were influenced by this philosophy, but also arguing that this conceptualization of history can help to shed a new light on some of the historiographical dilemmas in both regions' historiography. Finally, I will further highlight two key aspects of the neo-Thomist philosophy – the congruence of science and religion and the concepts of human freedom and teleology – and will analyse the relevance of these concepts in the genesis of the philosophy and their adaptation in Flanders and Quebec, as these two concepts will be further explored in the following two chapters.

II.1. The omnipresence of neo-Thomist Philosophy in the early twentieth century

As illustrated in the previous chapter, it has become apparent that the Catholic University of Leuven and the Belgian historiographical context had an influence on a number of French-Canadian Catholic historians during the first decades of the twentieth century. It will now be argued that this influence was intrinsically marked by the neo-Thomist philosophy which not only affected teaching at the Catholic University of Leuven but was also prevalent in forming French-Canadian and Flemish historians' historical worldview. By analysing the seminal works of the important neo-Thomists Désiré Nys, Maurice de Wulf and Désiré Mercier, I will make three main arguments about the importance of neo-Thomism and its relation to a section of Flemish and French-Canadian historians. First, it will become clear that all three took up vital positions at the Catholic University of Leuven during the first decades of the twentieth century, thus contributing to the importance and omnipresence of the neo-Thomist philosophy at Leuven. Secondly, the biographies of all three will show how in addition to an importance in the Belgian political, cultural and historiographical contexts, all three played a role in forming and organising a neo-Thomist Catholic network. Focusing on the ties between the Catholic University of Leuven and Fribourg, it will become clear that the prevalence of this connection influenced historians in Quebec, most notably Lionel Groulx, thereby reinterpreting the relevance of

Groulx's sojourn in Fribourg.²⁷⁹ Finally, the biographies will make clear that neo-Thomism, as perceived by the Leuven scholars, entailed a continuation of the key Thomist principles, adaptable to the new historical circumstances, which meant formulating neo-Thomism in a way that could comprise both the exact sciences and human sciences.

II.1.1 Three main neo-Thomists at the Catholic University of Leuven

II.1.1.1. *Désiré Nys and the trappings of the inorganic world*

Désiré Nys was born in Saint-Léger on November 23, 1859, and can be considered as the most peculiar out of the three persons analysed. Similar to De Wulf and Mercier, Nys would pursue a degree in theology at the Catholic University of Leuven.²⁸⁰ However, contrary to the other two, Nys would further specialize in natural sciences, with an emphasis on chemistry and physics. His colleague De Wulf had noted the peculiarity of this combination as well, commenting how "if one reflects on the conventional mentality of the 1880s, it might have seemed strange, almost abnormal, to see a young theologian-philosopher attend the chemistry and physics courses."²⁸¹ This interest would result in a degree in natural sciences, and Nys would continue to relate the neo-Thomist philosophy to these natural sciences, as is clear for example by the fact that the neo-Thomist would teach a course called *La chimie et l'introduction à la cosmologie* at the École St. Thomas d'Aquin at Leuven.²⁸² However, the best example of Nys' fixation on the relation between neo-Thomism and the natural sciences, and proof of his international stature is his work entitled *Cosmologie; ou, Étude philosophique du monde inorganique* which had first been published as his doctoral thesis in 1888.²⁸³ This work, which had known a number of reprints throughout the first decades of the twentieth century and an English translation in 1942 can be considered Nys' most popular work, and was read across the Catholic world – including Quebec – as is clear by the fact Lionel Groulx had a copy of Nys' work in his private library.²⁸⁴ One of the key aspects we have to point out in Nys' writings was, as his successor Fernand Renoirte made clear, "the notion of the individual in the inorganic world and the persistence of components in a mixture."²⁸⁵

²⁷⁹ See Ronald Rudin, *Making History*, pp. 30.

²⁸⁰ Maurice De Wulf, and Fernand Renoirte, 'Le Professeur Désiré Nys', *Revue néo-scholastique de philosophie*, 30 (1928), pp. 47-48

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 48.

²⁸² *Annuaire De L'université Catholique De Louvain: 71ère Année*, (Leuven: Vanlinthout, 1908), pp. 110.

²⁸³ The first edition, the doctoral thesis itself, was called *Le Problème cosmologique*. See Maurice De Wulf and Fernand Renoirte, 'Le Professeur Désiré Nys', pp. 48.

²⁸⁴ The English version of Nys's book is Desire Nys, *Cosmology: The Philosophical Study of the Inorganic World*, trans. Sydney Raemers (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1942); for a catalogue of Groulx's personal library, see Fondation Lionel Groulx, *Bibliothèque Lionel Groulx: Catalogue Des Livres*, (2011).

²⁸⁵ Maurice De Wulf and Fernand Renoirte, 'Le Professeur Désiré Nys', pp. 54.

This notion that inorganic bodies would maintain a unity of different components each defined by their own properties was only one of the positions taken up in the debates during this time, but what is interesting to note is that Nys' conceptualization of the inorganic world, as pointed out by Renoirte, was "independently supported by R.P. De Munnyck, O.P., who had recognized Nys' priority."²⁸⁶ The relevance of the figure of De Munnyck is twofold. First, De Munnyck was a professor of Philosophy at the University of Fribourg during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and was a contributor to the *Revue néo-scholastique de philosophie* which was published in Leuven, showing an indication of the connection between the two universities, and their overall place in the neo-Thomist network during this period.²⁸⁷ Secondly, De Munnyck had an influential role in the teachings of Groulx during the historian's sojourn in Europe in the first decade of the twentieth century. As Groulx points out in his *Memoires* De Munnyck was one the professors at Fribourg who had "left me with a durable and vivid memory".²⁸⁸ De Munnyck taught scholastic philosophy to Groulx, who recollected the popularity of the classes, pointing out how "for a simple distinction or opinion in scholastics, bands of students would not shy away from force to attend class."²⁸⁹ In addition to the popularity of the scholastic classes of De Munnyck, the Fribourg professor had a lasting philosophical impact on Groulx, who remembered how "during the first meeting, he [De Munnyck] handed me a task: to prepare a critical reflection of Bergson's *Données immédiates de la conscience*. Although it was an arduous task, it had permitted me, a modest doctor of philosophy from the University of Minerve [in Rome] to fathom an abyssal want in my mind."²⁹⁰ What is important to note, besides the influence Groulx himself ascribed to De Munnyck in his philosophical formation, is the critical understanding of the French philosopher Henri Bergson and his relevance to neo-Thomist philosophy in general.²⁹¹ Bergson's philosophy of life can be seen as an alternative to the neo-Thomist philosophy and had consequently been criticized by a number of neo-Thomists, most importantly Désiré Mercier, who had pointed out that "although [...] M. Bergson has set himself to free consciousness from the conventional to help it to an intuition of pure reality, he has not succeeded in emancipating himself from idealism. According to him, reality is only a whole made up of images."²⁹² By ascribing Groulx the task to prepare a critical reflection of Bergson's work, De Munnyck illustrates a similar critical attitude towards the French philosopher. The figure of De Munnyck, in relation to Nys and Groulx, thus

²⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 55.

²⁸⁷ See Marie-Thérèse Weber, 'Munynck, Marc De', in *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz* (2009).

²⁸⁸ Lionel Groulx, *Mes Memoires*, pp. 151.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 152.

²⁹⁰ Lionel Groulx, *Mes Memoires*, pp. 152.

²⁹¹ See Robert Kugelman, "The Major Fault Line: Modernism and Psychology," in *Psychology and Catholicism: Contested Boundaries*, ed. Robert Kugelman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 32-65.

²⁹² Désiré Mercier, *Origins of Contemporary Psychology*, trans. W.H. Mitchell (New York: Kenedy & Sons, 1918), pp. 189.

indicates how the neo-Thomist network of the first decades of the twentieth century entailed a philosophical connection between Fribourg and Leuven which subsequently influenced the French-Canadian historiographical context.

II.1.1.II. Maurice de Wulf and the synthesis of scholastic philosophy

Out of the three persons discussed in this section, Maurice de Wulf has a more traditional historical background. Born in 1867 in Poperinge in the western part of Flanders, De Wulf would attend classes at the episcopal college of Poperinge before enrolling at the Catholic University of Leuven in 1885.²⁹³ As explained in the previous chapter, until the law of 1890 history was not an established degree at the university, but in addition to his studies in law and philosophy and arts, De Wulf would receive some education in history, as is clear by the course schedule of 1885 which indicates a number of historical courses taught by the aforementioned Victor Brants and Charles Moeller.²⁹⁴ De Wulf, just as Nys, would become part of the newly founded *Institut supérieur de philosophie* where he specialized in history, and would become one of the leading experts in the history of medieval philosophy during the first half of the twentieth century. He published a number of works that would reach an international audience, most notably his *Scholasticism Old and New: an Introduction into Scholastic Philosophy Medieval and Modern* which would grant the neo-Thomist an international recognition, as is clear by his teaching position at the University of Toronto in 1918-1919 and by the fact that his *Scholasticism* was also part of Groulx's private library.²⁹⁵ The goal of the work, as de Wulf explained himself, was to "meet and combat false conceptions, to co-ordinate true notions, and so to furnish the reader with some *general information* on the new scholasticism."²⁹⁶ To attain this objective, de Wulf believed it was crucial to not only explain the development of the new scholastic philosophy, but also to provide a historical analysis of the Scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages, as it was apparent for de Wulf that "to form an idea of what *the new scholastic philosophy* is, one must evidently know what the *scholasticism of the Middle Ages* was, for the former is only a revival and adaptation of the latter."²⁹⁷ This symbiosis of philosophy and history is the main characteristic of how de Wulf envisioned the discipline of history of philosophy, explaining that "to do good work in the history of

²⁹³ Fernand Van Steenbergen, "De Wulf, Maurice Joseph Charles Jean," in *Biographie Nationale: Tome Trente-Troisième*, (Brussels: Établissements Émile Bruylants, 1965), pp. 753.

²⁹⁴ *Annuaire De L'université Catholique De Louvain: 49ième Année*, (Leuven: Vanlinthout, 1908), pp. 52-57.

²⁹⁵ See Maurice De Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New: An Introduction to Scholastic Philosophy Medieval and Modern*, trans. P. Coffey (Dublin: Gill & Son, 1907); Fernand Van Steenbergen, "De Wulf, Maurice Joseph Charles Jean," pp. 757-758; Fernand Van Steenberghen, 'Maurice De Wulf, Historien De La Philosophie Médiévale', *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, 46 (1948), pp. 439; Fondation Lionel Groulx, *Bibliothèque Lionel Groulx*.

²⁹⁶ Maurice De Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New: An Introduction to Scholastic Philosophy Medieval and Modern*, trans. P. Coffey (Dublin: Gill & Son, 1907), pp. viii.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

philosophy, one must be a philosopher no less than a historian.”²⁹⁸ This combination of history and (neo-scholastic) philosophy will be further discussed later, but what is interesting to note at this point is the debate that de Wulf’s historical vision of medieval scholastic philosophy triggered during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as it highlights the neo-Thomist connection between Leuven, Fribourg and Quebec.

According to the Leuven historian of philosophy, scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages could be summarized into one philosophical synthesis, which allowed on the one hand the historicity of each philosopher, whilst on the other hand provided an analytical framework to interpret medieval philosophy. As de Wulf noted, “*there is a philosophical synthesis common to a group of the leading doctors of the West. That synthesis does not sterilize originality of thought in the case of any one of them. It is predominant in the Middle Ages: to it belongs the name of ‘Scholastic Philosophy.’*”²⁹⁹ One of the leading critics of this interpretation of Scholastic unity during the Middle Ages – and more precisely the thirteenth century – was the Dominican scholar Pierre Mandonnet, who refuted this idea in his two-volume work *Siger de Brabant et l’averroïsme latin au XIII^e siècle* which was published, just as de Wulf’s work, by the *Institut supérieur de philosophie* at the University of Leuven.³⁰⁰ The figure of Mandonnet is of relevance to this section not only because of his connection to the neo-Thomists at Leuven – he would also publish a *Biographie thomiste* in 1921 – but because he was another professor at Fribourg that proved influential to Groulx, and his relation to the neo-Thomist network, and debate on philosophy of history can help to shed a new light on a dilemma in traditional Quebec historiography.³⁰¹

Similar to De Munnyck, Groulx ascribed a lasting influence to Mandonnet, explaining how “amongst the marginal courses I followed, there is one that I can’t omit: the weekly course from Pere Mandonnet.”³⁰² Although Groulx only briefly followed the course, the French-Canadian historian attributed a significant role to this course for his subsequent historical career, describing how “it was there, sitting at the feet of this wise Dominican who dissected his texts of the Middle Ages with a magnificent mastery, that the editor [Groulx] of the small *Cours d’histoire du Canada* [...] learned the extreme rigour of the famous discipline, and, in particular, the art of handling a document.”³⁰³ This statement however has to be treated critically, and has led to two conclusions in traditional

²⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 184.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 48.

³⁰⁰ Pierre Mandonnet, *Siger De Brabant Et L’averroïsme Latin Au Xiii^e Siècle*. 2 vols (Leuven: Institut supérieur de philosophie, 1908-1911); for more on the debate, see Brian Shanley, *One Hundred Years of Philosophy* (Washington Catholic University of America Press, 2001), pp. 117.

³⁰¹ Pierre Mandonnet, and J. Destrez, *Biographie Thomiste* (Kain: Le Saulchoir, 1921).

³⁰² Lionel Groulx, *Mes Memoires*, pp. 151.

³⁰³ Ibid.

historiography about Groulx's sojourn in Fribourg and the extent of his historical formation prior to obtaining his position as history professor at the Université Laval de Montréal in 1915. On the one hand, it has been argued, most notably by Rudin, that although limited, the lessons by Mandonnet had given Groulx his first formal training in the historical discipline, even going so far as to claim that "when Groulx returned home in 1909, he was one of the few Quebecers to have been exposed to modern notions of history as a discipline" a claim which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, has been disproven due to the connection between Quebec and the Catholic University of Leuven at this time.³⁰⁴ On the other hand there is a rejection of any possible historical formation Groulx had received during his time at the University of Fribourg. This perspective posits that because of Groulx's nationalism and Catholic beliefs, his historical perspective (and formation) was subsequently subdued under these notions, leaving limited room for a reflection on the historical formation Groulx might have received at Fribourg.³⁰⁵ Fribourg, in this sense, is a validation of Groulx's Catholicism, and not a locus where he received a professional historical training, as Nathalie Rouges for example explains how "the situation in Europe, despite its cultural prestige, had troubled Groulx and profoundly disturbed him. Only the Catholic Fribourg had reassured him and left him with a positive experience."³⁰⁶

While both arguments have their merit – he did receive historical training and the fact that Fribourg was Catholic must have been a positive for Groulx – what is lacking in this perspective on Groulx's development as a historian is the relevance of the neo-Thomist network, and the debate between Mandonnet and de Wulf on the nature of scholastic philosophy and history of philosophy. While Mandonnet and de Wulf differed on the existence of a synthesis of scholastic philosophy in the Middle Ages, both had the same perspective on the nature of history of philosophy, which was characterized as a symbiosis of historical formation and neo-scholastic philosophy. Groulx's historical formation, though limited in its scope due to his brief time enrolled in the course, was in this early stage already marked by the neo-Thomist philosophy, as exemplified by Mandonnet who, just as de

³⁰⁴ This claim, as we have seen in the previous chapter, has been disproven by the fact that there was an intricate connection between Leuven and Quebec, with a number of students having been 'exposed' to the modern notions of the historical discipline, or even graduating in it. Ronald Rudin, *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 30. See Page 55.

³⁰⁵ This perspective puts emphasis on Groulx's connection to the French right-wing intellectuals and seminal racial theories of the period, see for example Jacques Langlais, and David Rome, *Jews and French Quebecers: Two Hundred Years of Shared History* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010); Bruce Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), pp. 34.

³⁰⁶ Nathalie Rouges, 'L'image De L'Europe Dans Les Écrits De Lionel Groulx (1906-1909)', *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 46 (1992), 253; A very clear example of the practice of emphasizing Groulx's Catholicism over a possible historical formation is Serge Gagnon, *Quebec and Its Historians: 1840 to 1920*. trans. Yves Brunelle (Montreal: Harvest House, 1982).

Wulf, saw his profession as a symbiosis between history and philosophy. It is no surprise for example, that in Groulx's recollection of his historical formation at Fribourg, the "problems of technical history" that Mandonnet taught included "'Relation between erudition and history,' 'How to find and judge a document,' and 'Is there a philosophy of History?'" thus showing very clearly the relation between philosophy and history that marked the debates between de Wulf and Mandonnet.³⁰⁷

What the figure of de Wulf, and his debates with Mandonnet on the scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages have made clear is that in order to analyse the historians of Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century, it does not suffice to focus on the trappings of the historical discipline alone, as this neglects an essential part of the historiographical context of that period. To understand the formation of history in this period is to understand that its teachings in Leuven, Fribourg and Quebec, were embedded, enshrined in the neo-Thomist philosophy, and that all three were part of a Catholic network. This is, in conclusion, made clear by the fact that the debate between Mandonnet and de Wulf would later be reignited by the influential Catholic philosopher Etienne Gilson, who discarded de Wulf's notion of a synthetic scholastic philosophy.³⁰⁸ Gilson is relevant in this analysis as he was one of the co-founders of the *Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies* in Toronto in 1929, together with Gerard Phelan, a graduate in philosophy from Leuven in 1926, thereby highlighting the extent of this neo-Thomist network during this period, and the prevalence of Leuven in this extensive organization.³⁰⁹

II.1.1.III. Désiré Mercier and the development of neo-Thomism at Leuven

Désiré Mercier can be considered the most internationally renowned figure out of the three discussed. Not only did he play a vital role in the origin and development of the neo-Thomist philosophy at the last quarter of the nineteenth century, he was also crucial in establishing Leuven as one of the main centres of the neo-Thomist network during this period. To keep in line with the purpose of this section, it is beneficial to focus on three key elements of Mercier's life and career: his involvement in the revival of Thomist philosophy, his key role in the foundation of the *Institut supérieur de philosophie* at the Catholic University of Leuven and his complex relation with the Flemish Movement in the first decades of the twentieth century. Born in Braine l'Alleud on November 22, 1851, Mercier would attend class in Malines before obtaining his degree in theology at the Catholic University of Leuven in 1877.³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ Lionel Groulx, *Mes Memoires*, pp. 151.

³⁰⁸ Francesca Aran Murphy, *Art and Intellect in the Philosophy of Etienne Gilson* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), pp. 145-148.

³⁰⁹ Desmond J. FitzGerald, "Etienne Gilson: From Historian to Philosopher," *Thomistic Papers II*, ed. Leonard A. Kennedy and Jack C. Marler (Houston, Texas: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1986)

³¹⁰ A. Simon, 'Mercier, Desire-Joseph', in *Biographie Nationale: Tome Trentième*, ed. by Academie Royale des sciences, lettres et beaux-arts (Brussels: Etablissements Emile Bruylant, 1958), pp. 576.

Appointed to teach Thomist philosophy at the Catholic University of Leuven in 1882, Mercier would prove to be a vital figure in the revival of neo-scholastic philosophy and the emergence of Leuven as key centre in this network, ultimately culminating in his appointment as archbishop of Malines on February 7, 1906.³¹¹

It is during the twenty-five years he spent at the Catholic University of Leuven that Mercier would become one of the most important and influential figures in the neo-Thomist revival. To understand the origins of the neo-Thomist movement, and the role Mercier and Leuven played in it, it is first crucial to look at the figure of Gioacchino Pecci – Pope Leo XIII – whose 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris* is seen both by neo-Thomists and researchers as a crucial moment in the development of neo-Thomism.³¹² One of the key aspects in the encyclical was its emphasis on the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and the need to establish it across the Catholic world and universities in particular, as is clear by Pope Leo XIII stating that

We exhort you, venerable brethren, in all earnestness to restore the golden wisdom of St. Thomas, and to spread it far and wide for the defence and beauty of the Catholic faith, for the good of society, and for the advantage of all the sciences. [...] Let carefully selected teachers endeavour to implant the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas in the minds of students, and set forth clearly his solidity and excellence over others. Let the universities already founded or to be founded by you illustrate and defend this doctrine, and use it for the refutation of prevailing errors.³¹³

Pope Leo XIII would contribute to his own call for the renewal of Thomist philosophy by writing to the archbishop of Malines, cardinal Dechamps, in 1880 to ask him to found a chair in Thomist philosophy at the Catholic University of Leuven, a demand that would ultimately result in Mercier taking up the position in 1882.³¹⁴ Leo XIII's choice for Leuven and Belgium is interesting to note, as it lays bare a critical contextual element to explain and analyse the foundation of neo-Thomist philosophy at the Catholic University of Leuven. It is first instrumental to note that Leo XIII was appointed as papal nuncio to Belgium from 1843 till 1846, showing that Pope Leo XIII had a personal connection to Belgium, as this was the only place outside of Italy he had resided before his papal appointment.³¹⁵ While this is only a small element – it could even have had no effect on his decision at all – the larger

³¹¹ Robrecht Boudens, *Kardinaal Mercier En De Vlaamse Beweging* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1975), pp. 37.

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³¹³ Leo XIII, 'Aeterni Patris: Encyclical of Pope Leo Xiii on the Restoration of Christian Philosophy', Vatican, (1879) <https://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris.html>.

³¹⁴ Raphaël Tambuyser, 'L'érection De La Chaire De Philosophie Thomiste À L'université De Louvain (1880-1882)', *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, 56 (1958), 480.

³¹⁵ Joseph Keller, *The Life and Acts of Pope Leo XIII* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1883), pp. 222-226.

Belgian political context in which Pope XIII took up his position is crucial to understand the role of the Catholic University of Leuven and Mercier in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1842 the government of the liberal prime minister Nothomb passed the law on primary education, stipulating that each municipality had to provide for primary education.³¹⁶ In effect, the law subsidized private institutions to found their own schools and stipulated that the Catholic clergy had control over the religious courses, thus granting the Belgian Catholic Church a powerful grasp over education, and effectively constituting two different school systems – a public system organized by the State and a private network controlled by the Church.³¹⁷

Even though the law had sparked almost no resistance from its onset – the government of Nothomb comprised of mostly Catholics – the issue of two existing school networks in Belgium would become a highly divisive issue in Belgian politics throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.³¹⁸ While Catholics and Liberals had worked closely together during the first years of the Belgian state – their union was one of the key factors in the success of the Belgian Revolution – throughout the second half of the nineteenth century the two political fractions would increasingly become polarized, culminating in the fierce political dispute during the late 1870s and early 1880s over the Belgian school networks which came to be known as the ‘School War’.³¹⁹ Starting with the Liberal electoral victory in 1878, the Liberal Government of Frère-Orban and Van Humbeeck introduced the law Van-Humbeeck in 1879 which foresaw a complete reversal of the principles of the 1842 law, stipulating a reversal of Catholic control of the curriculum and forbidding the municipalities of subsidizing their own private (Catholic) schools.³²⁰ The law had sparked fierce resistance from the Belgian Catholic establishment which could rely on the support of pope Leo XIII who in his 1881 encyclical *Licet Multa* explained how “it is pleasant for us to give special praise to your solicitude in encouraging by all the means possible a good education for the young, and in insuring to the children of the primary schools a religious education established on broad foundations. Your zeal is applied

³¹⁶ Robert Smet, and André Vannecke, *Historiek Van Het Technisch En Beroepsonderwijs (1830-1990)* (Antwerp: Garant, 2002), pp. 66.

³¹⁷ See for example Bert Margot, 'Stijl En Standpunt. De Strijd Tussen De Belgische Doctrinair En Progressisten in De Tweede Helft Van De Negentiende Eeuw' (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2003).

³¹⁸ Lieve Gevers, 'Voor God, Vaderland En Moedertaal: Kerk En Natievorming in België, 1830-1940', *Bijdragen tot de Eigentijdse Geschiedenis*, 3 (1997), pp. 29-30.

³¹⁹ Els Witte, 'Centrumvorming in België. De Rol Van Brussel Tijdens De Stichtingsfase Van De Belgische Staat (1830-1840)', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 101 (1986), 601-29; Daniel Laqua, 'Church and State', in *The Age of Internationalism and Belgium, 1880-1930: peace, Progress and Prestige*, ed. by Daniel Laqua (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 82.

³²⁰ Michel Magits, 'De Evolutie Van Het Niet-Confessioneel Levensbeschouwelijk Onderricht in België: Een Vrijzinnig Humanistische Visie', in *Godsdienst En Levensbeschouwing in Het Onderwijs*, ed. by Hildegard Warnink (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2003), pp. 87-89; Els Witte, Alain Meynen, and Dirk Luyten, *Politieke Geschiedenis Van België Van 1830 Tot Heden* (Antwerp: Manteau, 2016), pp. 95-98.

with equal watchfulness to all that tends to the advantage of Christian education in the Colleges and Institutes, as well as to the Catholic University of Louvain.”³²¹ The encyclical can be seen as a response to the actions of the Liberals one year earlier, when, as a rebuttal to Leo XIII’s support of the Belgian Catholics, the Frère-Orban and Van Humbeeck Government broke off diplomatic relations with the Vatican.³²² While the tension between Liberals and Catholics would diminish in the following decades due to a plethora of reasons – the rise of Socialism and the crushing defeat of the Liberal party in 1884 amongst them – this Liberal-Catholic schism is crucial in understanding Leo XIII’s plea for a renewal of Thomist philosophy, and subsequently Mercier’s and the Catholic University of Leuven’s role in the foundation of a chair in Thomist philosophy at the Catholic University in 1882.

It is in this context that we should consider the subsequent endeavours sparked by Mercier to found a philosophical institute at the Catholic University of Leuven, a feature that would make Leuven a quintessential centre in the neo-Thomist network of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. One of the key aspects of Mercier’s philosophy and reasons to found the Institute was to provide a Catholic argument against the positivist and mechanist interpretations of science that were prevalent during this period. Mercier explains how

Indeed, it is strange that those who speak with contempt of philosophy, who glory in the name of *positivist* to emphasize they only profess knowledge of positive facts, or of *agnostic* to signify their unwillingness to concern themselves with whatever may lie beyond immediate facts, have their own general theories about things. [...] mechanism, [asserts] that the happenings in the world are all of them mechanical and hence their laws are in all cases to be identified with the laws of mechanics; [...] The discoveries the sciences of observation make and the practical solutions they afford do not bring the mind a full and abiding satisfaction. It is driven to seek the connection which links together the scattered results of these special sciences, it seeks to unify them and so learn how they fit in with the conditions of human life.³²³

With the success of his course on neo-Thomist philosophy – which both De Wulf and Nys had enrolled in – Mercier wanted to expand on this and found a philosophical institute that would not only provide an introductory class into Thomist philosophy but would challenge the sciences to interpret their findings from a neo-Thomist perspective.³²⁴ The notion of connecting the different sciences from a

³²¹ Leo XIII, 'Licet Multa: Encyclical of Pope Leo Xiii on Catholics in Belgium', Vatican, (1881) <http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_03081881_licet-multa.html>.

³²² See 'Art. Viii: Belgium and the Holy See', *The Dublin Review*, 35 (1880), pp. 413.

³²³ Desire Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*. trans. P. Coffey. 2 vols. Vol. 1 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1916), pp. 2.

³²⁴ Roger Aubert, 'Désiré Mercier Et Les Débuts De L'institut De Philosophie', *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, 88 (1990), pp. 158.

neo-Thomist perspective is clear in the fact that after the foundation of the *Institut* in 1889, Mercier would hire four different specialists (including Nys and de Wulf) that endeavoured to interpret their own scientific discipline from a neo-Thomist perspective.³²⁵

Despite its shaky financial start, the *Institut supérieur de philosophie* would prove to be the determining factor in establishing Leuven as one of the key neo-Thomist centres of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.³²⁶ This was partly due to the international appeal of its members – as seen with Nys and de Wulf – and partly due to the establishments of different channels to encourage and promote the neo-Thomist philosophy, most notably the journal *Revue néo-scolastique* founded in 1894. The goal of all these endeavours, and the *Institut* in general, was as Mercier explained “to compensate for the shortcomings of the isolated worker, and to reunite analytic and synthetic minds so that we can realise, through their daily labour and communal action, an environment that is fitting for the harmonious development of science and philosophy.”³²⁷ The objective of the *Institut* to create a fitting environment for the development of science and neo-Thomist philosophy would not limit itself to the confines of the *Institut*, and would prove to be highly influential on the Catholic University of Leuven in general, including the disciplines the French-Canadian students were enrolled in. To illustrate the widespread influence of neo-Thomist philosophy, and the pivotal role of the *Institut* at the university of this time, it is therefore beneficial to look at two cases that show how this philosophy had influenced the two departments – social and political science and history – that played a crucial role in the analysis of the connection between French-Canadian and Flemish historians.

If we take the course schedule for the School of Social and Political Science of the year 1906-1907 – the year three French-Canadians were enrolled in the programme – we can see that for the preparatory proof it was mandatory to take Nys’ class entitled *Psychologie y compris les notions élémentaires d’anatomie et de psychologie humaines*.³²⁸ While the French-Canadians did not have to take up this class – as they were preparing for the licentiate – the requirement of the department to take up Nys’ course as a compulsory course indicates the influence and involvement the professors of the *Institut* had in the teaching at the university. An illustrative example of the influence and

³²⁵ The other two were the experimental psychologist Armand Thiery and sociologist and jurist Simon Deploige. See Roger Aubert, 'Désiré Mercier Et Les Débuts De L'institut De Philosophie', pp. 157. For more on the two, see Louis De Raeymaeker, 'In Memoriam Armand Thiéry', *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, 53 (1955), pp. 124-28; Georges Delvigne, 'Deploige, Gilles, Simon', in *Nouvelle Biographie Nationale – Volume 8*, ed. by des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique Académie Royale des sciences (Liege: Groupe Graphique Chauveheid 2005), pp. 109-111.

³²⁶ Louis De Raeymaeker, 'Les Origines De L'institut Supérieur De Philosophie De Louvain', *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, 49 (1951), pp. 505-633.

³²⁷ Désiré Mercier, 'La Philosophie Néo-Scolastique', *Revue néo-scolastique*, 1 (1894), pp. 17.

³²⁸ *Annuaire De L'université Catholique De Louvain: 70ème Année*, (Leuven: Vanlinthout, 1907), pp. 93.

interconnectedness of the *Institut* with the rest of the university and that shows the neo-Thomist influence over the French-Canadians is the figure of Leon de Lantsheere.³²⁹ De Lantsheere, who was president of the School of Social and Political Science in the academic year 1906-1907 and taught the mandatory course *Droit privé comparé: le Code Civil de l'Empire allemand*, had obtained his licentiate in Thomist philosophy in 1885, was a collaborator for the *Revue néo-scholastique* and was invited by the *Institut* to present a conference on *The Philosophy of Hegel*.³³⁰ It is this combination of Lantsheere as director of the School of Social and Political Science and his neo-Thomist formation and connection to the journals and persons of the *Institut* that show how the neo-Thomist philosophy was not confined to the *Institut* alone, but had a lasting impact on the University in general.

The influence of the neo-Thomist philosophy and the *Institut* is also clear in the teaching of history, specifically in the Department of Philosophy and Letters on the one hand and the *Séminaire historique* on the other. If we look at the academic year of 1906-1907 we can see that Maurice de Wulf was director of the Department of Philosophy and Letters, and taught two courses at the department, including *History of Philosophy of the Middle Ages* and that, similar to the School of Social and Political Science, Nys's course was mandatory.³³¹ In addition, if we look at the *Séminaire historique*, spearheaded by Cauchie, we can once again see the influence of the neo-Thomist philosophy, particularly on Cauchie, who gave a specialized course at the *Institut* entitled *Méthode d'heuristique et de critique historique*, illustrating the *Institut's* and de Wulf's endeavour to combine (historical) science with neo-Thomist philosophy.³³² Roger Aubert describes this perfectly when he analysed the *Institut*, pointing out that

It was not about giving an elementary education which could be found in the courses at University or in the Seminaries of the religious establishments. It did not suffice to reedit or publish the texts of St. Thomas. It was about rethinking the Thomist problems and solutions by confronting them with the modern preoccupations, so as to complete or even modify them so that they were adapted to the actual conditions of life and spirit.³³³

So, what is crucial to note about the relation between the Catholic University of Leuven and neo-Thomism is that it far extended the curriculum itself and should be considered as an influential philosophy that guided different sections of the university during this period. This however does not

³²⁹ Jo Deferme, 'De Lantsheere, Leon', in *Nouvelle Biographie Nationale. Tome 10*, ed. by Académie royale de Belgique (Brussels), pp. 120-22.

³³⁰ See for example Léon De Lantsheere, 'Les Caractères De La Philosophie Moderne', *Revue néo-scholastique*, 1 (1894), 101-111; *Annuaire De L'université Catholique De Louvain*, pp. 93; 119.

³³¹ *Annuaire De L'université Catholique De Louvain*, pp. 104-115.

³³² *Annuaire De L'université Catholique De Louvain*, pp. 117

³³³ Roger Aubert, 'Désiré Mercier Et Les Débuts De L'institut De Philosophie', 158.

mean that we should define the neo-Thomist influence on Leuven as a specific school of thought that prescribed a certain methodology on the different sciences, as this would imply that every professor or teacher at Leuven explicitly adhered to the neo-Thomist philosophy, which was not the case.³³⁴ What it does entail is that the philosophical worldview and objectives of neo-Thomism – to bring science and religion into a harmonious synthesis – were underlying elements of the university and its academic writings and it is this philosophical viewpoint that, through the figures of Mercier and others, was spread out across the Western world, and would become influential in Canada and Quebec in particular. Understanding this philosophical context in both the Flemish and French-Canadian historiographies is crucial to further analyse the historiographical practices in both regions, and their similarities and differences.

Before analysing the influence of neo-Thomism on the historical discipline in both regions it is crucial to address one more issue regarding Mercier, as this is beneficial to frame the Flemish historiography and the influence of neo-Thomism on Flemish nationalist historians. Historians have pointed out the troubled relationship Mercier had with the Flemish Movement during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.³³⁵ To a certain extent, this can be seen as a continuation of the ‘School War’ in the sense that after the Catholics had concluded the political issues with the Liberals by maintaining their privileges and securing a political Catholic majority up until the First World War, the political issue of education shifted from a Catholic-Liberal to a Belgian-Flemish antithesis.³³⁶ One of the leading pre-war Flemish nationalists, Lodewijk de Raet, explained how “[the Flemish people] want a university that is open to everyone from higher or lower means. It does not want an anti-Flemish, nor a pro-Flemish [flamingant] university, but an institute of higher scientific learning like other civilized peoples already have.”³³⁷ The issue of a unilingual Dutch university of Ghent would remain one of the most striking political issues in Belgium throughout the first half of the twentieth century – ultimately leading to the unilingual Dutch University of Ghent in 1932 – and it would also lead to a first wedge between Mercier and the Flemish Movement. The archbishop, reflecting on the demands of the Flemish Movement to implement Dutch in the higher education, commented in 1906 that

³³⁴ An example is Léon Bossu, who was a specialist in Cartesianism, see Louis De Raeymaeker, ‘Les Origines De L’institut Supérieur’, pp. 516-517; David Boileau, *Cardinal Mercier: A Memoir* (Leuven: Peeters, 1996), pp. 16-17.

³³⁵ See Robrecht Boudens, *Kardinaal Mercier En De Vlaamse Beweging*; Jan de Volder, *Kardinaal Verzet: Mercier, De Kerk En De Oorlog Van 14-18* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2014), pp. 128-152.

³³⁶ Els Witte, Alain Meynen, and Dirk Luyten, *Politieke Geschiedenis*, pp. 95-98.

³³⁷ Lodewijk De Raet, ‘Waarom Gent?’, in *Over Vlaamsche Volkskracht: Uit De Geschriften Van Lodewijk De Raet*, ed. by Gaston Eyskens (Antwerp: Standaard Uitgeverij, 1939), pp. 314.

Whoever understands the role of a university which from a first point of view advances science and culture, can't reasonably pretend that French and Flemish should be considered as equals in the university education. And considering that everyone is first human and then Belgian, which means that the general interests of civilization are superior to the particular interests of a nation, the culture of French, for those who want to play a role in the universal movement of thought and action, has to prevail over Flemish.³³⁸

While it should be noted that Mercier in his comments did foresee certain concessions to the Flemish Movement on secondary and primary education, this particular quote on higher education had caused disappointment amongst certain professors, including Lodewijk Scharpé who, as indicated earlier, played a role in the formation and career of Hendrik Elias.³³⁹ What is interesting to note however about Mercier's comments is that they can be seen as a continuation of his neo-Thomist philosophy, in the sense that he believed the most viable option to create a harmonious symbiosis between science and religion – the general interests of civilization – was to converse in French since he believed it had a wider universal appeal and was thus more convenient to attain the universal goals Mercier described in his neo-Thomist philosophy. The crucial element here which will be discussed more in-depth later is that the rift between Mercier and the Flemish Movement does not necessarily entail a diminishing relevance of neo-Thomism, but rather shows a shift in the application of neo-Thomism: where Mercier conceived his neo-Thomist philosophy in a Catholic-Liberal antithesis, nationalists in French-Canada and Flanders would adapt the neo-Thomist philosophy in a nationalist paradigm due to the changing political context of the first half of the twentieth century. In this sense, Mercier's quote marks an interesting caesura in the interpretation and development of neo-Thomist philosophy.

The major division however between Mercier and the Flemish Movement would unfold during the First World War. During the War and occupation of Belgium, Mercier would vehemently oppose the German atrocities and occupation, attributing him an international status. The French historian Georges Goyau, with whom Groulx would later publish a book, described Mercier as the "messenger of an oppressed people", explaining how "he, as first one, before all the people of State and intellectuals of neutral countries, dared to proclaim, even during the German occupation, how this yoke was an injustice."³⁴⁰ Consequently, Mercier's stance against the German occupation also entailed

³³⁸ Karel Van Isacker, *Herderlijke Brieven over Politiek. 1830-1966* (Antwerp: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1969), pp. 81; *Waarheen Met België? Van Taalstrijd Tot Communautaire Conflicten: Een Selectie Uit 35 Jaar Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek*. ed. by Harry Van Velthoven, Karen Celis, Jasmien Van Daele and Els Witte (Brussels: ASP, 2011), pp. 119-121.

³³⁹ Robrecht Boudens, *Kardinaal Mercier En De Vlaamse Beweging*, pp. 79.

³⁴⁰ Georges Goyau, *Un Évêque Défenseur De La Cité: Lettres De S.E. Le Cardinal Mercier Au Cours Du Martyre De La Belgique, 1914-1918* (Brussels: Action Catholique, 1918), pp. 10-11.

a condemnation of the part of the Flemish Movement that collaborated during the First World War. In the aftermath of the War, Mercier would take a critical stance against the Flemish separatists because, as historian Boudens notes, they did not only threaten Belgian unity, but were also a threat to the Flemish clergy.³⁴¹ This opposition between the Flemish separatists and Mercier is crucial as the argument could be made that the neo-Thomist influence on the Flemish nationalist historians had to remain limited considering their opposition against Mercier. The problem with this argument however is that it ascribes too much importance to Mercier as founder of neo-Thomism. While it is true that Mercier played a crucial role in the foundation and development of neo-Thomism at Leuven, as seen earlier, after his appointment as archbishop Mercier had left the *Institut* and his positions at Leuven (one of his disciples, Simon Deploige, would take over the *Institut*) thus leaving the context in which a number of Flemish nationalist historians would receive their historical training.³⁴² Moreover, as argued before, neo-Thomism at the Catholic University of Leuven has to be perceived as an underlying philosophical element rather than a clear programme that was inextricably linked to the figure of Mercier. In addition, while the Flemish Movement has traditionally been described as decentralized in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, with examples of Flemish Liberals, Socialists and Catholics in the Flemish Movement, the national movement during this period was largely characterized by its Catholic elements.³⁴³ Consequently, the opposition to Mercier by Flemish nationalists did not necessarily entail a rejection of Catholicism and the neo-Thomist principles that underlined Belgian Catholicism during this period.

In conclusion, the opposition between Mercier and the Flemish Movement, and in particular the separatists, did not entail a diminished influence of neo-Thomism on the Flemish nationalist historians, seeing how the philosophy and the figure of Mercier should be considered as distinct when analysing Flemish nationalist historiography during this period. What the figures of Nys, de Wulf and Mercier have shown is that neo-Thomism as a philosophy and worldview stretched far beyond the confines of the *Institut*. It allowed for the Catholic University of Leuven to establish itself as a leading centre in the development of a neo-Thomist network that would also influence Canada and Quebec in particular. The question that now has to be addressed, after having established the primacy of neo-

³⁴¹ Robrecht Boudens, *Kardinaal Mercier En De Vlaamse Beweging*, pp. 197.

³⁴² See Georges Delvigne, 'Deploige, Gilles, Simon', pp. 109-111.

³⁴³ Carl Strikwerda, *A House Divided*, pp. 414-415; See for example Maarten Van Ginderachter, *Het Rode Vaderland: De Vergeten Geschiedenis Van De Communautaire Spanningen in Het Belgische Socialisme Voor Wo I* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2005). Daniël Vanacker, *Leo Augusteyns En De Liberale Arbeidersbeweging. Een Averechtse Liberaal. - Leo Augusteyns En Het Vlaams-Nationalisme. Van Activist Tot Antifascist* (Ghent: Academia Press, 2008); Harry Van Velthoven, 'Het Tumultueuze Politieke Leven Van Leo Augusteyns. Radicaal-Liberaal En Vlaamsgezind Volksvertegenwoordiger (1906-1919), Activist, Vlaams-Nationalist, Antifascist', *Wetenschappelijke Tijdingen*, 68 (2009), pp. 163-73.

Thomism in both regions, is how this philosophy and worldview influenced the historical theory and practice in both Quebec and Flanders.

II.II. Essence and existence: a comparison between neo-Thomist history and chemistry

Having established the prevalent presence of the neo-Thomist network in Flanders and Quebec, it is now possible to analyse how this philosophy and world-view influenced the way nationalist historians envisioned their historical discipline and conceived their philosophy of history. To illustrate the effects of neo-Thomism on the perception of history, it is beneficial to compare the interpretations of nationalist historians with that of neo-Thomist chemists, particularly with Désiré Nys, who, as indicated earlier, was an expert in the field. There are a number of reasons why comparing history with chemistry in a neo-Thomist framework is illustrative for the Flemish and Quebec cases.

First, there is the notion that history and chemistry can be considered as part of two different scientific families. By illustrating that neo-Thomism influenced both the exact sciences and humanities, we can argue that neo-Thomism was not limited to a specific set of methods but entailed a philosophy and worldview that was capable in this context to encompass different disciplines and sciences. Secondly, by focusing on two different cases we can better assess the similarities and differences between the two disciplines.³⁴⁴ By highlighting the differences, we can clearly analyse how historians adapted the neo-Thomist philosophy to the historical discipline, addressing not only the intricacies of the historical discipline in itself, but also the traditional historiographical definitions used to characterize nationalist historians in the first half of the twentieth century. Finally, by focusing on Nys on the one hand and the nationalist historians on the other it will become possible to see how the contextual shift, from ideological to national, affected the interpretation of neo-Thomist philosophy. Using the comparison then between chemistry and history I will make two general arguments. First, that both disciplines applied the most basic notion of Thomist philosophy – that each thing has an essence that is inextricably linked to its existence – to their respective scientific discipline. The consequence of this perspective, secondly, was that historians could portray national history in this neo-Thomist perspective, allowing, contrary to what traditional historiography claims, a certain degree of freedom and historicity to their historical actors and portraying national history in an evolutionary manner that was defined by its external historical circumstances.³⁴⁵ In this sense, I will argue that the conceptualization of energy by Nys and the nation by the nationalist historians was conceived from a shared neo-Thomist framework.

³⁴⁴ As highlighted in Section H.2.

³⁴⁵ This will be further analysed in Chapter IV.

II.III. (neo) Thomist Philosophy: Essence and Existence.

Before analysing the two different disciplines and their interpretation of neo-Thomist philosophy, it is first beneficial to briefly outline the principal tenets of the neo-Thomist philosophy in relation to the traditional scholastic or Thomist philosophy. The main object of neo-Thomism, as seen earlier with regards to Mercier and Pope Leo XIII, was to renew the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and adapt it to modern times and modern scientific disciplines. As Maurice de Wulf explains, neo-Thomism or scholasticism

aims at submitting the great leading principles of medieval scholasticism to the control of the latest results of scientific progress. The application of this test has modified the doctrinal content of the *new scholasticism* so far that we may distinguish it from its *medieval* ancestor: theories *now known to have been false* are simply ABANDONED; the great constitutive doctrines of the medieval system are RETAINED, *but only after having successfully stood the double test* of comparison with the conclusions of present-day science and with the teachings of contemporary systems of philosophy; new facts have been brought to light, and under their influence a store of new ideas has ENRICHED the patrimony of the ancient scholasticism.³⁴⁶

To understand the relevance of this aim and the neo-Thomist influence on the scientific disciplines of chemistry and history two elements have to be further explained: the conceptualization of the symbiosis between philosophy and science and what this exactly entailed on the one hand, and the prevalence of the interdependence of the notions of essence and existence as a core tenet of (neo) Thomist philosophy on the other hand.

II.III.I. Symbiosis of Philosophy and Science

As seen earlier, neo-Thomists in Leuven saw the congruence of science and philosophy as one of the key objects of their philosophy and necessary to adapt the Thomist philosophy to the modern times. The question however that remains is how neo-Thomists such as Mercier and de Wulf characterized philosophy in general, and how this affected their conceptualization of science. A first element they deemed crucial to address was the faltering importance of philosophy in modern times. Mercier for example admitted that “it is true that in the present age the task of the philosopher is more arduous than ever before. Materials continue to accumulate, discovery follows discovery so rapidly, that it has become impossible for a single mind to obtain a complete grasp of everything. This absence of a *complete philosophy adequate to all the present results of science* is accountable for the attitude of those who condemn or ignore philosophic speculation.”³⁴⁷ This description is a first indication of the

³⁴⁶ De Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New*, pp. 211.

³⁴⁷ Desire Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. 3.

way philosophy is envisioned by neo-Thomists. Philosophy in this sense is meant as a framework which unifies the findings of every different scientific discipline. As Mercier explains,

Philosophy does not profess to be a particularized science, with a place *alongside* other such sciences and a restricted domain of its own for investigation; it comes *after* the particular sciences and ranks *above* them, dealing in an ultimate fashion with their respective objects, inquiring into their connections and the relations of these connections, until finally it arrives at notions so simple that they defy analysis and so general that there is no limit to their application. So understood, philosophy will exist as long as there are men endowed with the ability and energy to push the inquiry of reason to its furthest limit. So understood, it is a living fact, and it has a history of more than two thousand years.³⁴⁸

Two elements in this quote need to be further explained. First, there is the notion that philosophy has a history of two millennia, and it will continue to have a relevance because its primary aim is to unite all different scientific disciplines. In other words, Mercier argues that philosophy will continue to exist even in modern times because throughout history it has time and again asked the most essential questions necessary to explain the connections and general applicability of science. De Wulf for example recognized this clearly when he stated that “philosophy cannot *completely* change from epoch to epoch [...] that down through all the oscillations of historical systems there is ever to be met with a *philosophia perennis* – a sort of atmosphere of truth, pure and undiluted, whose bright clear rays have lighted up the centuries.”³⁴⁹ Consequently, by characterizing philosophy as a *philosophia perennis*, neo-Thomists were able to legitimate the relevance of Thomist philosophy in modern times by arguing that the philosophical questions that were posed in the 13th century were still as relevant in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Secondly, the characterization of the sciences in accordance with the neo-Thomist philosophy, which unifies all of them, is relevant because Mercier does not make a particular distinction between the natural and historical sciences when it comes to their relation with neo-Thomism. Consequently, Mercier’s characterization of what constitutes a science was perceived in a general fashion as it had to allow for different branches to be included in the overall symbiosis of science and philosophy. While the specifics of what constitutes a science, and how this affected nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders will be further discussed in the following chapter, it is crucial for now to emphasise that Mercier saw each science as an autonomous discipline, with its own set of principles, methods and discoveries that would contribute to the overall truth, which was the object of philosophy. What is beneficial to note is that in neo-Thomist philosophy interdisciplinary was virtually impossible, for each science had its own boundaries and methods to investigate and attain the truth. As Mercier stated,

³⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 2.

³⁴⁹ De Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New*, pp. 161.

“the particular sciences [...] each regard an object which is common to a larger or smaller group of real things and which, in consequence, is relatively simple [...] But no particular science can exceed the limits which bound its special object; it is concentrated wholly on this without attempting to connect itself with the neighbouring sciences: it has its own processes of investigation and applies them, but it does not submit them to the higher principles that justify them.”³⁵⁰

The congruence of philosophy and science thus shows how neo-Thomists considered the practice of philosophy as a unifying factor that was necessary to bring together the discoveries of the particular sciences which were characterized by their own limited set of findings. In this sense, each science, whether natural or historical, was included as it was seen in the neo-Thomist framework as an essential element in discovering the overall truth. Understanding this crucial role of neo-Thomist philosophy as a unifying element is crucial when further assessing the influence it had on the historiographical practices in Flanders and Quebec, as will be analysed in Chapter III.

II.III.II. Existence and Essence

In their endeavour to adapt the Thomist philosophy to modern times, it has become apparent that neo-Thomists wanted to maintain the core doctrines of Thomism or the scholastic philosophy, whilst modifying certain elements to modern times. As de Wulf explained, “the transmission of philosophical ideas is in many ways analogous to the transmission of goods and fortune. Every epoch inherits from the preceding and bequeaths to the succeeding epoch.”³⁵¹ The question that remains then is what exactly these doctrines entailed, and how they influenced the practice and philosophy of the particular sciences. Here, we will analyse one particular tenet as it can be considered instrumental for the comparison between chemistry and history and can highlight how the neo-Thomist philosophy influenced historiography in Flanders and Quebec: the interdependence of the Thomist notions of *essence* and *existence*.

To understand the importance of this tenet, it is first of all crucial to present the neo-Thomists’ definition of the two notions of essence and existence. Mercier explains how “considered in so far as it is something, every body is a substance, determined by certain accidents, some of which are necessary and others contingent, and in itself composed of metaphysical parts, namely potential subject and specific form.”³⁵² Mercier further explained how

Essence is also called *substance*, a word used when we wish to emphasize its distinction from *accident*.

Both substance and accidents are realities; accidents are secondary realities which supervene upon a

³⁵⁰ Desire Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. 7.

³⁵¹ De Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New*, pp. 160.

³⁵² Desire Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. 38.

substance and determine it, whereas substance is a presupposed reality, determinable by the accidents: e.g., extension is an accident, the quantified body is a substance. An accident is inherent in a substance and—if there be no derogation from the natural law—is incapable of existence except as existing in a substance; substance on the contrary has no need of something else in which to exist.³⁵³

Substance or essence can then be defined as a being or object that is comprised of different properties or characteristics that are essential to its being. In addition, what is crucial to note is that although an essence is comprised of different properties each essential to its being, the essence in itself is conceived as one single object. Mercier himself elaborates on this by stating that

we must notice at the outset that though these characters or 'notes' by which we represent to ourselves a natural body are manifold, this by no means implies that the thing itself is not one single thing; it is our concepts that are many, for the reason that we are incapable of forming a single conception of a thing which adequately expresses to us its reality; the reality itself is not manifold, it is individualized, that is to say, it is undivided in itself, one, distinct from every other thing.³⁵⁴

At this point, it is possible to assess two things that will be relevant to the comparison between history and chemistry. First, there is the notion that an essence is characterized by different properties on the one hand but is in itself undivided so as to distinguish itself from another thing or being. What is important to note is that this underlying principle can also be related to the previous section, as the argument neo-Thomists made about the symbiosis between philosophy as generality and the sciences as particularity can be seen as an extension of this basic principle of (neo) Thomist philosophy. Secondly, there is the distinction between substance and accidents and the notion that a substance can be determined by the accidents which are in itself non-existent but can have an effect on the substance. This will be a crucial element, as we will see later, for the historians in Quebec and Flanders when analysing the concepts of teleology and contingency in their historical discipline in Chapter IV.

However, the notion of substance, which is in line with other philosophical currents and traditions, in itself is not enough according to the Leuven neo-Thomists.³⁵⁵ As Mercier explains, “the subject, whether we call it substance or nature according to a static or dynamic point of view, is made actual by existence.” This is one of the most crucial elements in the neo-Thomist philosophy and is of importance for our assessment of historiography in both regions. An essence or substance is only

³⁵³ Ibid., pp. 39.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ This current can be retraced to Aristotle's philosophy on substance. For more on the concept in Aristotle's philosophy, and its relation to Thomist philosophy, see Michael Wedin, *Aristotle's Theory of Substance: The Categories and Metaphysics Zeta* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Gilles Emery, 'Central Aristotelian Themes in Aquinas's Trinitarian Theology', in *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology*, ed. by Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 1-28.

capable of being if it exists in reality.³⁵⁶ Mercier explains this clearly when describing how “a thing, if we look at its whole meaning, is itself an essence in the state of being potential to existence and its existence is its actuality; in other words, existence makes an essence actual. Thus 'esse est ultimus actus' [being is the ultimate act], to use the Scholastic terminology.”³⁵⁷

Out of this we can assess a crucial element that will be of the utmost importance in the analysis of the neo-Thomist influence on Flemish and French-Canadian historiography: the interdependence of essence and existence in neo-Thomist philosophy. What has become apparent in the descriptions of the notions of essence and existence in neo-Thomist philosophy is that both concepts need each other in order to be real. A substance, while defined by properties that are unique to itself, can't be real unless it exists, in other words, unless the potentiality that is part of its being has become actual. Similarly, an existence can't be real unless it is defined by essential properties, otherwise it can only be constituted as an accident which is, as seen earlier, not a substance for it can't exist on itself and needs to be inherent to a substance, which is defined by its essential properties. Out of this, finally, we can assess that a substance in neo-Thomist philosophy is always comprised of two factors: those that are essential, that make it distinct, and those that are accidental, that are defined by the existence of the specific being or entity. Having defined and outlined these notions and tenets, it becomes possible to compare the two scientific disciplines of chemistry and history and see the extent to which neo-Thomism has influenced historiography in Flanders and Quebec during the first half of the twentieth century.

II.IV. neo-Thomist Chemistry and the inorganic world: Nys and the prevalence of energy

Having outlined the key tenet in the comparison between chemistry and history, it is now possible to analyse how chemistry was perceived in the neo-Thomist framework. To illustrate the neo-Thomist interpretation of chemistry, the works of Désiré Nys will be used. As seen earlier, Nys was a colleague of Mercier and de Wulf and a specialist in chemistry. Consequently, it can be assumed that his interpretation of what constituted chemistry is a good representation of the symbiosis between neo-Thomism and chemistry.

A first notion that must be highlighted is that Désiré Nys's conceptualization of chemistry was part of his larger study on cosmology which, as he indicated himself, was “*the philosophical study of the inorganic world.*”³⁵⁸ Nys's conceptualization of cosmology itself is a first indication of the neo-

³⁵⁶ This of course implies that Aquinas did not question that reality was real, see Frederick Coppleston, *A History of Medieval Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972), pp. 178-198.

³⁵⁷ Desire Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. 40.

³⁵⁸ Désiré Nys, *Cosmologie; Ou, Étude Philosophique Du Monde Inorganique*. 2 edn (Paris: Alcan, 1906), pp. 1.

Thomist interpretation, as it can be seen as a practical realization of the neo-Thomists's emphasis on the symbiosis between philosophy and science. Chemistry, in this sense, is part of the study of the inorganic world which is unified with the other sciences of the inorganic world in the philosophical framework of cosmology. Nys himself explains this clearly when he elaborates on his definition, pointing out that "in this succinct formula one can find, on the one hand, the material object which cosmology wants to make knowledgeable, the inorganic world, and, on the other hand, the formal object or the special angle through which it wants to contemplate it: the philosophical point of view."³⁵⁹ The discipline of chemistry, which was Nys's expertise, has to be considered then as one specific discipline that was embedded in the larger philosophical framework that was constituted as cosmology or the philosophical study of the inorganic world. Nys would further elaborate on this point, criticizing his colleagues who restricted their work to "synthesiz[e] their experimental findings, classify them, and express through mathematical formulas their relation, order of succession and effects."³⁶⁰ For Nys, philosophy was a crucial element in the explanation of the findings that were discovered in his field. He explains that

If the nature of the properties must remain an enigma for us, the attitude of the *énergétistes* [scholars of energy] is understandable. But isn't the aphorism of Du-Bois Reymond "*ignoramus et ignoramus*" [we are ignorant and will remain ignorant] disproven by experience itself? We don't live in a world of illusions. However imperfect our understanding of the exterior world, it is objective and real, and out of this, we can assess that between the essence of a property and its perceptible factors there must be a relation of cause and effect.³⁶¹

What is crucial to note then is that Nys, through the notion of cosmology, sought an explanation that could incorporate the findings of his own specific field in a general, intelligible framework. In Nys' case, the emphasis would be put on the concept of energy and its role in the inorganic world. To understand the relevance of this concept, and Nys's emphasis on it, it is beneficial to address the general context and academic debates in which Nys took up his position. First, it is crucial to point out that Nys had studied chemistry under the tutelage of Wilhelm Ostwald in Leipzig during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.³⁶² Ostwald was a renowned scientist and chemist at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century – he would ultimately receive the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1909 – and

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Nys, 'L'énergétique Et La Théorie Scolastique (Suite Et Fin)', *Revue néo-scholastique de philosophie*, 19 (1912), pp. 10.

³⁶¹ Nys, 'L'énergétique Et La Théorie Scolastique (Suite Et Fin)', pp. 11.

³⁶² Helge Kragh, *Entropic Creation: Religious Contexts of Thermodynamics and Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 81.

played a key role in the foundation of physical chemistry.³⁶³ For this section, it is important to look at Ostwald's role in the discussion surrounding energetics – the study of energy - at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, as it will help to contextualize Nys' position and view.

Ostwald's publication of *La déroute de l'atomisme contemporain* in 1895 can be seen as a crucial point in the debates on energetics and will allow us to highlight two different elements.³⁶⁴ In this article Ostwald explained how "everywhere people repeat in an axiomatic fashion that only the Mechanic [theory] of atoms holds the key to the world of physics. Matter and movement, those are the two concepts by which the most complex natural phenomena are ultimately analysed. This theory is otherwise known as *materialistic physics*."³⁶⁵ It is this mechanistic interpretation of the natural world, and subsequently the two concepts of matter and movement, which Ostwald criticized, stating that "it is my conviction that this point of view, despite its merits, is untenable; that this mechanic theory does not attain its goal because it finds itself in contradiction with the unquestionable and universally accepted truths. So, the following conclusion imposes itself: one has to abandon [the theory] and replace it with a better one."³⁶⁶

The answer, according to Ostwald, revolved around the concept of energy, which could be used to replace the – in his view – outdated theory. The German chemist explained how "Mayer has discovered the most general invariable, *energy*, which governs all the physical forces. In all their history matter and energy have remained side to side, and all we know of their relation is that, for the most part, they are congruent, with matter being the vehicle, the reservoir of energy."³⁶⁷ By depicting matter, one of the crucial elements of the traditional mechanistic theory, as a mere vehicle for energy, Ostwald put emphasis on energy as the most general guiding principle of the natural world. Consequently, this meant that matter was nothing more than an "invention" and that "the effective reality, that is to say, that which has an effect on us, is energy."³⁶⁸ Moreover, what is interesting to note about Ostwald's theory of energy as underlying force of the natural world is that he did not limit its extent to the inorganic world, but also saw its implementation from a sociological point of view, as

³⁶³ "Wilhelm Ostwald - Biographical". *Nobelprize.org*. Nobel Media AB 2014. Web. 7 Feb 2017. <http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/chemistry/laureates/1909/ostwald-bio.html>

³⁶⁴ The original German article was called *Die Überwindung des wissenschaftlichen Materialismus*. See Wilhelm Ostwald, 'Die Überwindung Des Wissenschaftlichen Materialismus', in *Dritten allgemeinen sitzung der versammlung der Gesellschaft deutscher naturforscher und ärzte* (Lübeck: Veit & Comp., 1895).

³⁶⁵ Wilhelm Ostwald, 'La Déroute De L'atomisme Contemporain ', *Revue générale des sciences pures et appliquées*, 6 (1895), pp. 953.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Wilhelm Ostwald, 'La Déroute De L'atomisme Contemporain ', pp. 957.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 956.

is apparent by his chapter entitled 'Sociological Energetics' in his seminal work *Die Energie* (1908) in which he explained how "social energetics plays itself out in a much greater variety of ways with humans [...] because while animals generally only have the energy of their own bodies at their disposal, humans also avail themselves of many other kinds of energy", relating the nature of these different form of energies in humans to the role of culture which, according to Ostwald, "*consists in ensuring the most favourable transformation coefficient for the energy to be converted.*"³⁶⁹

Ostwald's emphasis on energy as the guiding principle of the natural world, and as a response to mechanist interpretations, has had a clear influence on his student Nys, who, to a certain degree, accepted his mentor's perspective. In accordance with Ostwald, Nys believed in the value of the energetic theory and its response to the mechanist theory. Nys explains how "with energetics on the contrary, the [notion of] local movement loses its sovereign importance which the mechanist theory ascribes to it and retakes its modest place amongst the many diverse phenomena that take place in the world. [...] Energy has become the fundamental notion that embraces the ensemble of properties and transformations of matter."³⁷⁰ Moreover, for Nys in particular the theory of energy holds extra relevance since, according to him, it has "given to physics a natural basis unto which science and philosophy can reconcile."³⁷¹ Nys' assessment, in line with neo-Thomist tradition, of the congruence of philosophy and science also leads to a first point of critique on the traditional energetic theory. He explained how "the new theory, to summarize, is a method of classification, no more than that. Is it desirable that in the interest of science and philosophy that physics [...] abstains itself from taking up a position or judgement on the constitution of the properties of matter? We don't believe it is."³⁷² Because of the neo-Thomist's emphasis on the congruence of philosophy and science, we can assess a first principle of influence on the specific scientific disciplines, i.e. the belief that it is desirable to take up a position, to pass judgement on discoveries and discovered facts, an element which will be further discussed in Chapter III.

Secondly, Nys criticized Ostwald's description of matter as a mere invention, the result of the foundational element of energy. To fully understand this critique, it is beneficial to first look at the way Nys related the scholastic theory to cosmology and chemistry, as this will help to clarify Nys' critique. According to Nys, the

[Scholastic] system can be reduced to three fundamental propositions:

³⁶⁹ Janet Stewart, 'Sociology, Culture and Energy: The Case of Wilhelm Ostwald's 'Sociological Energetics' – a Translation and Exposition of a Classic Text', *Cultural Sociology*, 8 (2014), pp. 341; 344.

³⁷⁰ Nys, 'L'énergétique Et La Théorie Scolastique (Suite Et Fin)', pp. 6.

³⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 8.

³⁷² Ibid., pp. 10.

1. Simple bodies and chemical compounds are beings endowed with *substantial unity*, specifically *distinct* from one another, and naturally *extended*.
2. These beings possess *active and passive powers* which belong to them in virtue of their substantial essence and are indissolubly bound up with it
3. They have an *inherent tendency* to realize by the exercise of their native energies certain special ends.

From these principles there follows an important corollary: the possibility, or rather the necessity of substantial transformation and, in consequence, the existence in every natural body of two constitutive principles, *matter and form*.³⁷³

Out of this characterization, Nys formulated two points of critique against Ostwald's definition of matter and energy that were in line with his neo-Thomist philosophy.³⁷⁴ First, Nys argued that because essence and existence – *matter and form* – had to form a substantial unity, it was impossible to claim, as Ostwald did, that matter (i.e. form) had no meaning or real influence on a chemical or substantial compound. Nys argued that “what characterizes matter is the natural requirement it imposes with regard to the properties [of a substantial compound] making it impossible for it to be completely segregated from them. However, there is not proof that it has to essentially possess them in such or such an invariable degree.”³⁷⁵ The properties, according to Nys, were “electricity, magnetism, chemical affinity and the forces of attraction and repulsion”, specifying that these “have their roots in the underlying foundation and remain indissolubly united, even when they are affected by the general law of transformation.”³⁷⁶ What is important to note in Nys' assessment of the role of matter is that he saw the properties and matter as an indissoluble unity, meaning that, in accordance with what has been argued, there has to be an interdependence between the essence – i.e. properties – and existence – i.e. the matter that exists in space and time. Nys illustrated this point clearly when he explained how

So great is the imperfection of essential forms in the inorganic world that they are not only immersed, to use St. Thomas' word, in matter, but are dependent for their generation and existence upon a *determined quantity* of matter. The atomic weights, 16 of oxygen, 32 of sulphur, 35*5 of chlorine, are so many definite masses of matter necessary for the very existence of these bodies. Here the subjection

³⁷³ Nys, 'The Scholastic Theory: Historical Sketch', in *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, ed. by Desire Mercier (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.), pp. 73.

³⁷⁴ Emphasis in this section is on the first two principles, as the last principle will be analysed in depth in Chapter IV as it addresses the concept of teleology in neo-Thomist philosophy.

³⁷⁵ Nys, 'L'énergétique Et La Théorie Scolastique (Suite Et Fin)', pp. 18.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

of the form to its substrate is as profound as possible; the physical impossibility of breaking it up without destroying it provides us with an evident proof.³⁷⁷

This characteristic of unity also leads to Nys' other point of critique, in the sense that not all properties, as Ostwald would suggest, can be categorized as a form of energy. Nys explained how

there are two ways to classify under the banner of 'energy' the ensemble of a matter's properties. On the one hand, one can consider *certain* properties as constitutive of the power of action which characterizes energy and the other properties, either as means of measure or as conditions for activity. Or, on the other hand, one regards *everything* as constitutive elements of the dynamic power, or, to use the phrase, as factors of energy.³⁷⁸

For Nys, the former interpretation is "perfectly compatible with the scholastic theory", whereas the latter holds the danger to lead to an "absolute dynamism" which is incompatible with his neo-Thomist interpretation.³⁷⁹ Nys can't accept the element of absolute dynamism (i.e. that everything is a factor of energy) because he, through his neo-Thomist philosophy, ascribed different primacies to different properties. By levelling all properties to a form of energy, the neo-Thomist distinction between essential and existential properties loses its relevance, and thus the neo-Thomist philosophy is not applicable to the discipline. That is why Nys makes a distinction in what constitutes a property, and what is a mere contingent element or accident, as a result of the distinction between essence and existence. Nys explains how

There are two kinds of accidents: *contingent accidents* and *necessary accidents or properties*. When we glance at the material world, some accidents immediately strike us as not attaching necessarily and invariably to the bodies in which we see them; they may come and go without the bodies changing essentially—such as local movement, mechanical impulse, colour, etc. These are called *contingent accidents*. On the other hand, other accidents are *properties* [...] which not only are never entirely absent but may even not undergo more than certain modifications, fixed by the nature of each body, without involving a change of species. It is these necessary accidents of a body which together characterise it and, as experience shows, serve as the basis of scientific classification.³⁸⁰

Out of Nys's critique on the energetic theory of Ostwald we can thus assess three major elements which are crucial in its comparison with the historiographical cases, and which will show the extent of the neo-Thomist influence on the historical discipline in French Canada and Flanders. First, that because of the emphasis on the congruence of philosophy and science it is required for a scientist to

³⁷⁷ Nys, 'The Scholastic Theory: Historical Sketch', pp. 79.

³⁷⁸ Nys, 'L'énergétique Et La Théorie Scolastique (Suite Et Fin)', pp. 22.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Desire Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. 82.

assess and judge the facts that have been discovered, for it was necessary to incorporate the particularities of a science (i.e. facts) into a larger philosophical framework that helped to explain not only the discipline but the external reality as well. Secondly, due to the prevalence and distinction of the notions of essence and existence Nys had defined two sets of elements – essential and contingent accidents – that were interdependent and as such defined a certain substance or being. “The substance”, Nys explains, “is the *final cause* of the properties: the latter are natural instruments or means which the substance has at its disposal for attaining its ends. They exist only for the sake of the substance.”³⁸¹ What is crucial to emphasise is that both elements were crucial for the substance as the essential properties need an existence in order to become reality. Consequently, this means that the underlying principle – energy – needs a concrete existence (i.e. matter and other contingent elements) in order to become a specific and unique substance.

Finally, Nys, contrary to Ostwald and other energetics, believed that each substance had an indissoluble unity, which meant that the essential properties that constitute a certain substance are inherently present, although he admits that their degree might vary in different transformations, leaving a certain degree of variability in the different essential properties. These three elements combined can be formulated in a simple equation (see Appendix 6) which clearly shows Nys’ neo-Thomist interpretation of the inorganic world and more specifically his conceptualization of the principle of energy and energetics. In what follows, I will argue that this representation of the inorganic world by the neo-Thomist Nys had a similar application in the historiographical practices of Flanders and French-Canada, showing the influence and relevance of the neo-Thomist philosophy, and the three elements discussed here, on the representation of history by nationalist historians.

II.V. The Essence and Existence of the Nation

Having assessed the three essential neo-Thomist principles that influenced Nys’s interpretation of his field, it is now possible to see the similarities and differences with the historical discipline and see how the influence of neo-Thomism is both similar and different. What will become clear, as outlined in Appendix 6, is that the framework applied to Nys’s interpretation is also applicable to the nationalist historians in Flanders and Quebec. First, it will become apparent that historians ascribed to the nation a similar role as Nys did to energy as the founding underlying principle, meaning that everything in history was influenced by the nation. Moreover, it will be illustrated, secondly, how historians in both regions envisioned history in the same essential-existential interdependent framework as Nys did, meaning that the essential properties of a nation (which themselves were indissolubly connected) were not sufficient, as they need an existence (i.e. the historical circumstances) in order to progress

³⁸¹ Nys, 'The Scholastic Theory: Historical Sketch', pp. 83.

towards the final cause. This meant that, contrary to traditional portrayals of these regions' historiography, nationalist historians ascribed an important role to the historicity and evolutionary (i.e. existential) nature of the nation, which was the result of the influence of the neo-Thomist distinction between essence and existence. Finally, by describing the difference between the nationalist and inorganic application of the neo-Thomist framework, we can assess and highlight the contextual shift in which these adaptations took place, when the nationalists, in a changed political context due to the emergence of explicit nationalist movements in both regions, adapted the traditional neo-Thomist philosophy into an explicitly nationalist framework.

A first similarity between the two disciplines is the notion that there was an underlying guiding principle. Where energy in Nys's framework was seen as the foundational element, for nationalist historians the guiding underlying principle of history was the nation. While the national perspective did not have a monopoly on nineteenth and early twentieth century historiography (the imperial perspective is a counterexample), it has been illustrated by numerous historians that the common historiographical framework was national.³⁸² What is important to note in this comparison is that this meant that the subject of the discipline, the past, was seen as being guided by the nation, in a similar fashion as Nys saw the inorganic world guided by the notion of energy. Leo Delfos for example reflected on the debates on the historical battle of 1302 and argued that "the national significance of the revolt is so clear that even contemporary historians, who try to frame this in a social perspective, can't deny this bare truth in their arguments."³⁸³ A similar approach was apparent in Quebec when Laferrière stated that "our patriotism can retrace its roots in our most distant past."³⁸⁴ What is important to note is that, as there were different applications of the general concept of energy, so too the nation had numerous appearances and forms. In this sense, the wide array of different national interpretations that existed in interwar Flemish historiography – Great-Netherlandish, Flemish volk or Flemish nation – can all be seen as different forms of the underlying national principle and illustrate how, despite their different interpretation, they were marked by the same guiding principle.

In traditional historiography, the prevalence of the concept of the nation in history has led to the conclusion that the nation is an unchangeable entity in history and that the essential properties

³⁸² See for example *Writing National Histories: Western Europe since 1800*. ed. by Stefan Berger, Mark Donovan and Kevin Passmore (London: Routledge, 1999); Stefan Berger, and Chris Lorenz, *Nationalizing the Past: Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). An illustrative example of the subversion of this traditional national framework in Belgian historiography is Jo Tollebeek, 'At the Crossroads of Nationalism. Huizinga, Pirenne and the Low Countries in Europe', *European Review of History*, 17 (2010), pp. 187-215.

³⁸³ Leo Delfos, *1302 Door Tijdgenoten Verteld* (Antwerp: 1931), pp. 1-2.

³⁸⁴ Article L'éducation patriotique par l'étude de notre histoire, 1933, Fonds Abbe Joseph-Ernest Laferrière, CH012, Box 2, Folder CH012/000/000/032, Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe, Saint-Hyacinthe, Canada

of the nation determine the individual and historical context, resulting in anachronism and a fixed entity that is not affected by the historical circumstances.³⁸⁵ Consequently, both Flemish and French-Canadian nationalists have been categorized in the same manner, resulting in the traditional descriptions and interpretations that ascribed to the nation an aprioristic or ahistorical role. Boily for example relates the work of Groulx to that of Herder, noting that “Groulx realises the individualisation of the nation by ascribing it character traits that are generally ascribed to individuals.”³⁸⁶ The consequence, as is clear in Beyen’s description of the Flemish nationalist historians, is “the consequent anachronistic use of the words ‘Flanders,’ ‘Flemings,’ and ‘Flemish’. The modern meaning of those words [...] were unscrupulously [a] projection on the entire history before the Belgian Revolution [1830] when Flanders in the [modern] sense simply did not exist.”³⁸⁷

It should be noted that this traditional characterization is not incorrect, as it is clear that nationalist historians in both Quebec and Flanders did ascribe certain essential traits to the omnipresent nation. In both Quebec and Flanders, emphasis was put on language as one of the key elements that characterized a nation, remaining unaltered, whilst also defining an individual. The Flemish literary historian Antoon Jacob for example explained how “of the unity of the volk language constitutes the natural foundation,” indicating that “language is inextricably linked to all social interaction; without her, any social activity is impossible.”³⁸⁸ In a similar fashion, Groulx described how

The conservation of language, being a sign, an expression of the national soul, presupposes, we believe, another reality which transcends it and is called a soul, a national conscience. It thus seems elementary that a people can’t attach itself to its speech if it does not believe in a nationality, that is, one of those spiritual higher entities which is proud enough of itself to include the will to perpetuate itself with all its cultural attributes.³⁸⁹

Language in this sense is an essential characteristic that defines a certain nation, that makes it different from other nations that exist in the world. In this sense, traditional historiography is correct in stating that these characteristics in nationalist historiography are supra-historical, that they

³⁸⁵ This type of nationalist interpretation has also been characterized as ‘primordialist’ in the field of nationalism studies, see Umut Özkırmılı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 67.

³⁸⁶ Frédéric Boily, *La Pensée Nationaliste De Lionel Groulx* (Montreal: Septentrion, 2003), pp. 25.

³⁸⁷ Marnix Beyen, “Een Werk Waarop Ieder Vlaming Fier Kan Zijn”? Het Boek 100 Groote Vlamingen (1941) Als Praal façade Van Het Vlaams-Nationale Geschiedenisbouwwerk”, in *De Lectuur Van Het Verleden. Opstellen over De Geschiedenis Van De Geschiedschrijving Aangeboden Aan Reginald De Schryver* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998), pp. 433.

³⁸⁸ Antoon Jacob, ‘Volk, Staat En Natie’, in *Het Vlaamse Konflikt En Het Federalistische Beginsel*, ed. by Antoon Jacob (Antwerp: de Sikkel, 1920), pp. 9.

³⁸⁹ Lionel Groulx, *Orientations* (Montreal: Librairie Deom Frere, 1935), pp. 173-174.

transcend historical reality and can be considered as anachronistic. The problem however in the traditional description of nationalist historiography in Flanders and Quebec is that it does not include the neo-Thomist paradigm to explain nationalist historians' historical worldview. Consequently, for an explanation of the nationalist historiography in both regions researchers have relied on the traditional paradigm to explain the historiography, resulting in an overemphasis on the essentialist properties of the nations in these regions' historiography. Boily for example admits that Groulx "to my knowledge, never cites Herder nor has any works of the thinker in his private library, even though it is well stocked."³⁹⁰ By contrast, we have pointed out that Groulx did possess a number of neo-Thomist authors in his private library and made reference to a number of Belgian Catholic historians (most notably Kurth) and other neo-Thomist historians (Mandonnet), thus strengthening the case that one should consider the neo-Thomist paradigm as influential on Groulx and other French-Canadian Catholic historians. If one considers the neo-Thomist paradigm, and particularly the interdependence of essence and existence, it is possible to shed a new light on the nationalist historiography of Flanders and Quebec, and can help to nuance the traditional essentialist description, which, though correct, highlights only one aspect of the two cases' nationalist historiography. Consequently, and similar to Nys, these nationalist historians in Flanders and Quebec recognized the existential necessity of their essential properties: a nation had to exist for it to be real. What this meant was that a nation could not only be a supra-historical entity, but needed the historical contingent variables in order to be real. This crucial element can be highlighted via the adaptation of the neo-Thomist tenet in the two cases' nationalist historiography.

First, nationalist historians recognized, in accordance with the neo-Thomist philosophy, that an individual, i.e. the concrete substance of the underlying national principle, always had the indissoluble unity of its contingent and essential properties. Consequently, an individual was both historical and non-historical in the sense that it was defined by its historicity and its nationality which were always in unison with each other. What this means is that an individual was still ascribed a degree of freedom, that the essentialist elements were not as deterministic on the historical context as is often implied in the traditional historiography.³⁹¹ Groulx for example illustrates this interdependence very clearly when he explained that "one has to be wary of historical determinism or materialism and never forget or even dismiss the actions of man, the supreme agent in history, often the inspirator or labourer of different grand evolutions, even if he can never totally direct or master the forces he has

³⁹⁰ Frédéric Boily, *La Pensée Nationaliste De Lionel Groulx*, pp. 25.

³⁹¹ Dialectic between freedom and determinism will be further analysed in Chapter IV.

unleashed.”³⁹² Groulx would not only ascribe a particular role to grand historical evolutions, but to society (i.e. nation) as well, pointing out that “man is not only the ‘efficient cause of the society’ but also the ‘proper cause of particular societies’”, highlighting the interdependence that existed between society or nation, the (Herderian) essentialist principle, on the one hand and the historical contingent, the existential individual, on the other hand.³⁹³ Flemish nationalist historians illustrated a similar perspective on the role of individuals in history, arguing that the contingent historical circumstances were crucial in making the essential properties of the nation real. Van Roosbroeck for example illustrates this clearly in the work *100 Groote Vlamingen* [100 Great Flemings]. On the one hand, Van Roosbroeck makes reference to a “Flemish essence”, explaining that “Flanders was a border region: it continually built up its forces for resistance”, ultimately resulting in a “Flemish culture with a strong European character.”³⁹⁴ On the other hand however Van Roosbroeck makes clear that “the character of this culture was heavily influenced by the historical facts”, indicating the influence of the contingent, historical circumstances on the essential properties.³⁹⁵ Moreover, the whole premise of the book is to highlight the importance of different historical actors in the origins and development of the Flemish essential properties, and to make it existential in Van Roosbroeck’s own time, as is clear by his explanation that “the force of the Flemish national conscience that is apparent in these ‘100 Great Flemings’ has transmitted our Flemish essence over the course of centuries of hectic history to the threshold of our own time.”³⁹⁶

What is clear is that for these nationalist historians in both Quebec and Flanders the essential properties of a nation – be it language, religion or race – could not exist without the contingent historical actors, who were not only the recipients of the essential traits, but were crucial in the formation and development of the essential characteristics in the existential reality. There is thus, in accordance with the neo-Thomist paradigm, an interdependence between the necessary and contingent elements which are indissolubly united in the historical actor, i.e. the individual recipient of the national properties.

Out of this overlooked interdependence between the essential and existential elements of a nation, we can assess a second element that has been misrepresented in traditional historiography:

³⁹² Lionel Groulx, 'Carrière, Gaston, O.M.I., Un Apôtre À Québec — Le Père Flavien Durocher, O.M.I., (1800-1876) Premier Curé De Saint-Sauveur. Rayonnement, Montréal, 1960. 191 p', *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 16 (1962), pp. 138.

³⁹³ Jean-Pierre Gaboury, *Le Nationalisme De Lionel Groulx: Aspects Idéologiques* (Ottawa: Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1970), pp. 117.

³⁹⁴ Rob Van Roosbroeck, *100 Groote Vlamingen: Vlaanderens Roem En Grootheid in Zijn Beroemde Mannen* (Antwerp: Standaard Uitgeverij, 1941), pp. 5.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 6

³⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 7.

the possibility of an evolutionary national essence in nationalist historiography. Because of the emphasis on the essentialist properties of the nation in the two regions' historiography, it has often been argued that historians in both regions envisioned history as a static progress of the essentialist principles throughout history, in which the contingent factors had little to no impact on the existence and reality of the ahistorical elements. The historian Wils for example explains how Elias in his work *Onze Wording tot Natie* [Our Maturation into a Nation] (1932) locates the origins of Flemish nationalism in the 16th century, from which, throughout the following centuries, slowly but surely a growing sense of Flemish nationalism and belonging to the Flemish nation would arise, ultimately coming to a full confrontation with Belgian nationalism during his own time.³⁹⁷ Elias, as we will analyse in Chapter IV, did not foresee one large teleological process of national development, but recognized different stages influenced by the historical circumstances, leading to the conclusion that "we fully accept the evolutionary possibilities of this national conscience and arrive at a succession of different national communities in the Netherlands."³⁹⁸

The clearest example however of this static description is in the treatment of the rural element in French-Canadian nationalist historiography. Boily highlighted the prevalence of this element when arguing that "for Groulx, one of the most significant aspects of the nation is its rural element."³⁹⁹ Consequently, the traditional historiographical analysis has often put emphasis on the dialectic relationship between the focus on the rural trait of French-Canadian nationalism and the urbanization that occurred in the region during the first half of the twentieth century. The historian Serge Gagnon for example explained how "as Abbe Groulx wrote, the fortress of survival, the rural families were weakening as urbanization increased. [...] On the whole, his pastoralism was shared widely by the clergy of the day."⁴⁰⁰ Historians are generally not mistaken in this assessment, as there are numerous examples of traditional clerical nationalists expressing anxiety and fear over the effects of growing urbanization in French Canada during this period. Esdras Minville, a colleague of Groulx at the nationalist journal *Action française*, for example pointed out how "the Canadian city is the tomb of tradition", explaining that "their [French-Canadians'] soul perishes together with their history."⁴⁰¹ Minville's description of the dangers of urbanization is a first indication of understanding how the neo-Thomist paradigm can shed new light on the traditional historiography's emphasis on the dialectic

³⁹⁷ Lode Wils, 'Elias of Het Gevecht Met De Geschiedenis', *Wetenschappelijke Tijdingen*, 51 (1992), 199.

³⁹⁸ Hendrik Elias, *Onze Wording Tot Natie. Inleiding Tot De Geschiedenis Der Vlaamsche Beweging* (Kortrijk: Uitgeverij Steenlandt, 1932), pp. 8-9.

³⁹⁹ Boily, *La Pensée Nationaliste De Lionel Groulx*, pp. 26.

⁴⁰⁰ Serge Gagnon, *Quebec and Its Historians: 1840 to 1920*. trans. Yves Brunelle (Montreal: Harvest House, 1982), pp. 120.

⁴⁰¹ Esdras Minville, 'La Défense De Notre Capital Humain – 'Le Réservoir De La Race' ', *l'Action française*, 15 (1926), pp. 271. For more on Minville, see Dominique Foisy-Geoffroy, 'Esdras Minville Et Le Nationalisme Économique, 1923-1939', *Mens: Revue d'histoire intellectuelle de l'Amérique française*, 1 (2000), pp. 51-68.

relationship between the essence of French-Canadian nationalism and the existential threats of the actual time (i.e. urbanization). The issue was not, as traditional historiography would argue, the incompatibility of French-Canadian clerical nationalism with urbanization, as this would imply, contrary to the neo-Thomist paradigm, that it was possible to dissolve the unity of the contingent and essential properties in favor of the latter. The issue for nationalists and nationalist historians was, as the quote by Minville indicates, the continuance of the essential properties (i.e. the soul) in changing historical circumstances. For Groulx and other nationalists, the issue was not a return to an earlier context, it was the adaptation of the essential properties that were in harmony with a previous contingent existence to a rapidly altering existential reality. This becomes apparent in Groulx's assessment of the urban context and the role of (national) education. The historian compared the education in French Canada to the United States, and explained how

Around twenty-four years ago [1910], our people were still largely a people of the countryside, which could still pass as a tight society [...] The social and economic factors everybody recognizes have radically overthrown and changed that situation. We live largely in the city now, and the city has transported its values to the countryside, hence the breakdown of the old ramparts, resulting in the omnipresence of the American microbe. The souls are thus in need of a special tonic; the human metal can't be forged in the old fashion anymore. And I beg of you the question: when everything around us transformed, did our school system change considerably? Has she become a system capable of addressing the national goals and restoring our lives?⁴⁰²

Groulx and other nationalists realized and acknowledged the importance of the changing reality and the transformations it had wrought on the previous contingent reality. The issue then was not the restoration of the previous contingent reality (i.e. the rural countryside) as traditional historiography suggests, but the restoration of the essential properties in the changing historical circumstances. This is why education played a key role for historians in both regions: the essential properties the historian dissected from the flow of contingency had to serve as a guide to address contingent issues of their own time, and strengthen their nation in its resolve, and will to continue to exist in constantly changing historical circumstances. Laferrière for example explained how "all the people that are self-conscious have researched the appeal of the [social] force [of the past]. They have recognized the principle of their most pure and invigorating energies. [...] Out of the past lessons, examples, experiences and guiding lights arise. The past is a school of respect, pride, continuity, magnanimity and of courage."⁴⁰³ In a similar fashion, Van Roosbroeck, who also published *Wandplaten voor het onderwijs in de*

⁴⁰² Lionel Groulx, 'Pour Qu'on Vive', ed. by Action Nationale (1934), pp. 10. (*Orientations*, pp. 229-230.)

⁴⁰³ Article L'éducation patriotique par l'étude de notre histoire, 1933, Fonds Abbe Joseph-Ernest Laferrière, CH012, Box 2, Folder CH012/000/000/032, Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe, Saint-Hyacinthe, Canada.

vaderlandsche geschiedenis [Wall charts for the education of patriotic history], ascribed a similar role to the value of historical education, stating in the introduction of the *History of Flanders* how

Flanders needs, especially in these times when a cataclysmic storm of post-war events has threatened all historical values, more than ever a history of its past. The complex character of present events will be explained through the lessons of the past and it will become abundantly clear that only by clinging obstinately to the character of our folk, the essence of our folk, will it be able to persist through these wild times.⁴⁰⁴

What the statements by Laferrière and Van Roosbroeck highlight is that historians in both regions, in accordance with the neo-Thomist paradigm and in a similar fashion to Nys, applied the essence-existence framework to their historical discipline which resulted in a conceptualization of history in which the essential properties of the nation needed a contingent existence in order to be real, which meant that a nation was always dependent on its historical, contingent factors. Consequently, this resulted in the realization by historians in Flanders and Quebec that in order for the nation to survive, to continue to exist in reality, it was crucial for them to educate their peers about the, according to them, essential properties of the nation so that they were prepared to address the contingent issues that threatened the existence of the nation. In this sense Groulx's comments on urbanization are not a rejection of the urban contexts as is often suggested, but a rejection of the effects urbanization has had on his French-Canadian peers, and particularly, as Minville noted as well, the possibility it has in destroying the lessons of history (i.e. the essential properties) and by consequence the nation itself. This is illustrated clearly when Groulx stated that "the great issue for the French-Canadians, and one has to dare to say it, is that there are no French-Canadians," which, in accordance with the neo-Thomist framework, meant that the existential reality had been disjointed from the essential properties, resulting in the non-existence of the essence.⁴⁰⁵

What Groulx's remarks on the non-existence of French-Canadians illustrates is the apparent similarities between the nationalist historians and Nys, both seeing the necessity of the interdependence between the essential and existential properties in their respective fields. That is why it is possible to formulate the nationalist historians' historical worldview in a similar fashion as Nys's cosmological perspective, as is indicated in Appendix 6. The major difference between the two interpretations is thus the shift that occurred from a strictly Catholic perspective towards a nationalist transformation of the neo-Thomist framework. This is explicable due to the changing political contexts of the first half of the twentieth century, and the emergence and importance of nationalist

⁴⁰⁴ Rob Van Roosbroeck, *Geschiedenis Van Vlaanderen*, pp. 7-8; J. Uytterhoeven, and Rob Van Roosbroeck, *Wandplaten Voor Het Onderwijs in De Vaderlandsche Geschiedenis* (Antwerp: De Sikkel).

⁴⁰⁵ Lionel Groulx, 'Pour Qu'on Vive', pp. 12.

movements in both regions during this period. Both regions were marked by national upheavals in education, language and politics, culminating, as seen before, in the First World War with the collaboration of Flemish activists on the one hand and the divisive federal election in Canada in 1917 on the other hand.⁴⁰⁶ What is important to note is that this context not only affected the explicit national movements which included the analysed historians, but also had its influence on the neo-Thomists discussed, with the example of Mercier as protector of the fatherland the clearest case of the changing political context, in which the traditional Catholic-Liberal antithesis was rapidly replaced by a national framework.⁴⁰⁷ How exactly this changing political context affected the outcome of the two cases' adaptation of the neo-Thomist tenets into a national framework will be further discussed in the following chapters.

II.VI. Conclusion

The comparison between the neo-Thomist representation of the inorganic world and the historical past has thus allowed us to shed new light on the nationalist historiography of the two regions during the first half of the twentieth century. What has become clear is that both disciplines adapted one of the tenets of the neo-Thomist philosophy – the idea that essence and existence are interdependent – to their respective fields. Both disciplines believed that each substance holds essential properties which are indissolubly attached to the substance as they are the distinguishing factors, whilst simultaneously needing the contingent historical factors, i.e. the existential elements, for its essence to be constituted as real. Contrary to traditional historiography then, this interpretation and element in nationalist historiography led the historians to the conclusion that the national essential properties do not suffice for them to be guaranteed a continued existence, and need the historical circumstances in order to be real. This can lead to two major refinements of the traditional descriptions of the two cases' historiography. First, it has revealed how nationalist historians ascribed an important role to the historical contingent factors for the development and existence of their national essential properties. The result of the neo-Thomist framework was that Flemish and French-Canadian historians were not only essentialist in their historical perspective, but also ascribed a contingent historicist element to their nation's history: it was impossible for the nation to exist without the historical actors (i.e. individuals) that were not only defined by the nation's essential properties, but also by their existence in the historical reality.

This led to the second major element in the characterization of these two regions' nationalist historiography: the belief that the existential traits and historical circumstances can influence the

⁴⁰⁶ Margaret Conrad, *A Concise History of Canada*, pp. 189-199; Els Witte, Alain Meynen, and Dirk Luyten, *Politieke Geschiedenis Van België*, pp. 159-161.

⁴⁰⁷ Lionel Groulx, 'Pour Qu'on Vive', pp. 12

adaptation and realization of the essential properties. While the historians believed that the essential properties were indissolubly attached to an individual, this did not guarantee their continued existence, as the historical circumstances could alter or reject the essential elements, ultimately leading to a nation's decay. That is why historians put emphasis on the need for national education, as an overview of the essential elements throughout history would educate their peers and strengthen them in their own time, so as to address the contingent historical circumstances with the belief and loyalty to the essential properties that defined them. This is why, contrary to what traditional historiography suggests, Groulx and other nationalists did not want a restoration of the rural, pastoral context, but wanted to emulate in their urban context the symbiosis of the essence and existence they believed was apparent in the pastoral time. The pastoral context was thus not the essentialist characteristic that Boily and others believed it was, but was an example, a historical lesson for Groulx's peers as to how to successfully combine the essentialist properties (language, race and religion) with a specific historical setting, thus guaranteeing the survival of their nation.

It should be noted however that in the comparison between the inorganic and historical perspectives we have not yet addressed the other two principal tenets in the neo-Thomist philosophy: the congruence of philosophy and science and the idea that each being has an inherent tendency to develop itself towards its final end. These two concepts will be further analysed in the following two chapters. Contrary to the interdependence between essence and existence, what will become apparent is that these two principles of neo-Thomist philosophy led to different applications and outcomes in the two regions, showing how the different regional contexts influenced the applicability of the neo-Thomist principles, thereby highlighting their inherent malleability. Chapter III will analyse the congruence of philosophy and science, and particularly the focus on what constituted scientific history in both regions, and the different realization of similar principles that stem from this neo-Thomist necessity to have a congruence of science and philosophy. Chapter IV will address the issue of teleology and human freedom, the notion that each being has an innate tendency to develop itself towards its final end, and how this was realized in the different political contexts of interwar Quebec and Flanders.

Chapter III. Science and Religion: Neo-Thomism and nationalist historiography

In the previous two chapters, we have established two major conclusions. First, it has become clear that nationalist historians in both Quebec and Flanders were influenced by the Belgian Catholic historiographical tradition, pointing to the influence and role of the Catholic University of Leuven. Secondly, we have further analysed what exactly this historiographical influence entailed, making it clear that it was the neo-Thomist framework that gave a significant impetus to the conceptualization and realization of nationalist historiography in both regions. Moreover, we made clear that the neo-Thomist framework and philosophy entailed three significant tenets that were of importance to the nationalists' historiography, analysing in the previous chapter the first of those three – the interdependence of existence and essence. In this chapter, we will analyse the second of the three key tenets of neo-Thomism – the congruence of philosophy and science.

Based on the notion of the congruence of science and philosophy that was instrumental to the neo-Thomist philosophy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, I will make three general arguments in this chapter. First, I will argue that the traditional portrayal of nineteenth and early twentieth-century historiography has erroneously categorized the nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders as unscientific. I will argue that the traditional portrayal of historiography in both regions fails to recognize the importance of the neo-Thomist framework and, consequently, assesses the significance and practices of both regions' nationalist historiography based on an inadequate framework. This leads to the second argument I will make, and which will clarify the dilemma traditional historiography has had in assessing the nationalist historians' claim of scientific history while propagating a subjective historiography. Using the concept of the congruence of science and philosophy, I will argue that, in accordance with the neo-Thomist philosophy, historians in Quebec and Flanders believed it was possible to adhere to an objective science whilst simultaneously advocating a subjective interpretation. Finally, I will argue that despite the similarity in the theoretical conceptualization of what constituted scientific history, the practical realization in both regions was different. Using a paratextual analysis of popular historical works in Quebec and Flanders during the interwar period, I will argue that because of the different academic context – with the Flemish case embedded in a Belgian context whereas the French Canadian case was more isolated – the Flemish nationalists used specific paratextual elements so as to present their work as a scientifically objective

debunk of the traditional Belgian historiography, whereas the French-Canadian nationalists, due to their autonomous academic context, were less inclined to present their work in a scientific fashion.

III.I. Scientific History: the denial of philosophy

To understand the importance of the neo-Thomist framework on the conceptualization of scientific history in Quebec and Flanders, it is first of all beneficial to analyse the traditional portrayal of both cases' historiography, as it allows us to show the deficiencies of the traditional definitions, whilst simultaneously pointing out how the neo-Thomist philosophy and tenets will help to clarify certain dilemmas that were the result of the traditional interpretation of the nationalist historiography.

III.I.I. Rankean Maxim: Rejection of philosophy of history

The traditional characterization of nationalist historiography in Flanders and Quebec can be considered as an adaptation of the traditional analysis of nineteenth and twentieth century European and American historiography.⁴⁰⁸ A couple of elements need to be highlighted so as to illustrate their adaptation to the two cases' historiography, and the deficiency this portrayal has with regards to the neo-Thomist framework and context. First and foremost, historiography in the modern period has traditionally been described as the development of a historical academic discipline that strove to attain objectivity.⁴⁰⁹ In this sense, emphasis has traditionally been put on the figure of Leopold von Ranke and the influence and role he played in the genesis of the historical science.⁴¹⁰ The Rankean maxim, to study the past "wie es eigentlich gewesen" [how it essentially was] is of crucial importance to understand the traditional portrayal of nationalist historiography.⁴¹¹ While there has been debate on the content and nature of Ranke's maxim, one of the crucial elements to highlight is the separation of philosophy of history and scientific history that resulted from his conceptualization of history.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁸ Chris Lorenz, 'Unstuck in Time. Or: The Sudden Presence of the Past', in *Performing the Past: Memory, History and Identity in Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), pp. 71-81; Chris Lorenz, 'Double Trouble', pp. 49-70; Jo Tollebeek, 'Historical Writing in the Low Countries', pp. 283-302.

⁴⁰⁹ See Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Paul Newall, 'Historiographic Objectivity', in *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, ed. by Aviezer Tucker (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 172-80; Herman Paul, 'Distance and Self-Distanciation: Intellectual Virtue and Historical Method around 1900', *History and Theory*, 50 (2011), pp. 104-16.

⁴¹⁰ Georg Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 23-30; Roger Spalding, and Christopher Parker, *Historiography: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 8-9; Frederick Beiser, 'Ranke's Romantic Philosophy', in *The German Historicist Tradition*, ed. by Frederick Beiser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 253-88.

⁴¹¹ Leopold von Ranke, 'Preface to the First Edition of the Histories of the Latin and Germanic Nations', in *Theory and Practice of History* ed. by Georg Iggers (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 86

⁴¹² Iggers in particular argues that the traditional English translation of the maxim has failed to convey the essentialist element that is included in the German word *eigentlich*, see Georg Iggers, and Wilma Iggers, *The Theory and Practice of History*, pp. xi-xiv.

This is clear for example if we take into account the full extent of Ranke's maxim, in which he stated that "to history has been given the function of judging the past, of instructing men for the profit of future years. *The present attempt does not aspire to such a lofty undertaking* [Cursive KS]. It merely wants to show how it essentially was (wie es eigentlich gewesen)." ⁴¹³

The result of Ranke's rejection is that throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century historians have traditionally portrayed history and philosophy of history as distinct, with the former claiming the factuality of the past – Ranke's judgement – whereas the latter put emphasis on the general themes that could be learned from the past and passed on to future generations – Ranke's instruction for the profit of future years. ⁴¹⁴ Consequently, this specific characterization of the two disciplines by historians is of importance to understand the traditional portrayal of nationalist historiography in Flanders and Quebec, as it adheres to this distinction which is outlined in Appendix 7. Taking for example the seminal early twentieth-century historical work by Langlois and Seignobos, the *Introduction to the Study of History*, we can highlight how historians distinguished between the historical science and philosophy of history. ⁴¹⁵ The two French historians explained how it

[has not] been our intention to add a new item to the abundant literature of what is ordinarily called the "Philosophy of History." Thinkers, for the most part not professed historians, have made history the subject of their meditations; they have sought for its "analogies" and its "laws." Some have supposed themselves to have discovered "the laws which have governed the development of humanity," and thus to have "raised history to the rank of a positive science." ⁴¹⁶

Out of this quote we can distil the most common characterizations that historians used to distinguish the historical science from philosophy of history, and are instrumental in framing the traditional portrayal of nationalist historiography in Flanders and Quebec, as outlined in Appendix 7.

III.I.II. The distinction between the historical discipline and philosophy of history

First, there is the notion that philosophy of history was concerned with the general, underlying principles of history, whereas, by contrast, "professed historians" would focus on a historical period or event. By defining the object of philosophy of history to discern general laws and analogies in history, Langlois and Seignobos not only distinguished the historical science from philosophy of

⁴¹³ "Leopold von Ranke, 'Preface to the First Edition', pp. 86.

⁴¹⁴ Robert Doran, 'Choosing the Past: Hayden White and the Philosophy of History', ed. by Robert Doran (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

⁴¹⁵ See Julio Bentivoglio, 'História E Hermenêutica: A Compreensão Como Um Fundamento Do Método Histórico – Percursos Em Droysen, Dilthey, Langlois E Seignobos', *OPSIS: Revista do Departamento de História e Ciências Sociais*, 7 (2007), pp. 67-80; Laurent Mucchielli, 'Une Lecture De Langlois Et Seignobos', *Espaces Temps*, 59 (1995), pp. 130-36.

⁴¹⁶ Charles-Victor Langlois, and Charles Seignobos, *Introduction to the Study of History*. trans. G.G. Berry (Edinburgh: Ballantyne Press, 1898), pp.1.

history, but from the positive sciences as well. Secondly, by describing proponents of philosophy of history as “thinkers” who envision history as the “subject of their meditations”, it becomes clear that historians did not ascribe a sense of objectivity to the discipline of philosophy of history. This emphasis by historians on the apolitical nature of their own research and the underlying prevalence of objectivity in the historical science has come under scrutiny in recent decades by historians such as Hayden White, but it is, secondly, important to reiterate what exactly the traditional emphasis on historical objectivity entailed, as it is beneficial for our analysis of the traditional portrayal of Flemish and Quebec nationalist historiography.⁴¹⁷

In the preface to the English edition of Langlois and Seignobos’ work, the historian Frederick York Powell, holder of the Regius Chair of Modern History at Oxford until his death in 1904, described how “the historian very properly furnishes the ethical student with material, though it is not right to reckon the ethical student's judgment upon the historian's facts as history in any sense. It is not an historian's question, for instance, whether Napoleon was right or wrong in his conduct at Jaffa, or Nelson in his behaviour at Naples; that is a matter for the student of ethic or the religious dogmatist to decide.”⁴¹⁸ By distinguishing the historian from a religious dogmatist or a student of ethics, Powell illustrates the historical discipline’s ideal to strive for apolitical objectivity, and only analyse and ask questions that are directly related to the primary sources.

Out of the description of the two principles in the work of Langlois and Seignobos it becomes possible to give a general portrayal of the elements historians emphasised in order to distinguish their own discipline from philosophy of history, as outlined in Appendix 7. Two elements however need to be further clarified, as this is crucial to understand the traditional analysis of historiography in Flanders and Quebec, and why neo-Thomism can help to provide a new insight to this practice. First, it is important to emphasise that this description of philosophy of history is derived from historians’ conceptualization of what the historical science entailed. Consequently, the distinction between philosophy of history and the historical science has to be considered as the most extreme form of distinction between the two disciplines, in that it implies two distinct disciplines completely isolated from one another. This leads to the second and most lasting effect of the Rankean maxim and its influence on the analysis of historiography in the last two centuries. By portraying the historical science as essentially different and isolated from philosophy of history, it implies the impossibility of

⁴¹⁷ See for example Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973); Keith Jenkins, *Rethinking History* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 6-32.

⁴¹⁸ Charles-Victor Langlois, and Charles Seignobos, *Introduction to the Study of History*, pp. xii; For more on Powell, see Robert Rait, 'Frederick York Powell', *English Historical Review*, 19 (1904), pp. 484-92.

mutual influence or any form of symbiosis between the two disciplines. Consequently, when assessing or analysing a historical work or historian, it was imperative to be categorized as either philosophy of history or historical science, each subsequently defined by their own characteristics. It is this combination of the general typology of the historical science with the impossibility of overlap between philosophy of history and the historical science that has traditionally been used to analyse the nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders.

III.I.III. Traditional portrayal of nationalist historiography in Flanders and Quebec

By using the distinction between philosophy of history and the historical science, researchers have traditionally described the nationalist historiography of the first half of the twentieth century as not adhering to the characteristics outlined in Appendix 7, consequently concluding that the nationalist principles and political and ideological premises dominated their historical practice. The historian Serge Gagnon for example illustrates this traditional portrayal clearly when in his description of the post-war historian Michel Brunet he explained how Brunet, as “heir and successor to Garneau and Groulx, shared their conviction that scholarship was useful in so far as it served the interests of the national group. Such scholarship had a mission to raise French-Canadian consciousness and stimulate action, and had no room for those not imbued with this sense of duty toward society.”⁴¹⁹ In a similar fashion, the historian Jo Tollebeek explained how interwar Flemish historiography was marked by the “connection between history and politics”, concluding that “a lot was political propaganda.”⁴²⁰ What is apparent from this portrayal of nationalist historiography is the adherence to the supposed indissoluble distinction between the historical science and philosophy of history, resulting in the dominance of one discipline – i.e. philosophy of history – over the other.⁴²¹

In recent decades, however, this portrayal of nationalist historiography as unscientific has been criticised. From a theoretical point of view, the indissoluble distinction between the historical discipline and philosophy of history has been criticized by figures such as Hayden White, who explained that “the fight between historians and philosophy of history is really more in the nature of a family feud than a conflict between practitioners of different disciplines or between a discipline properly practiced and one improperly practiced.”⁴²² Consequently, this critique on the practice and

⁴¹⁹ Serge Gagnon, *Quebec and its historians*, pp.19.

⁴²⁰ Jo Tollebeek, 'Historiografie', pp. 119-120.

⁴²¹ See for example Eliane Gubin, 'D'une Histoire Nationale À L'autre: À Propos De L'historiographie Du Mouvement Flamand En Belgique', *Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles*, (1981), pp. 125-46; Jo Tollebeek, 'Historiografie', pp. 119-120.

⁴²² Hayden White, 'The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation', in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, ed. by Hayden White (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp.63

theory of the historical discipline resulted in alternative analyses of Quebec and Flemish nationalist historiography. The historian Gérard Bouchard for example encapsulates this drive for a reconciliation between philosophy of history and the historical discipline in the analysis of historiography by positing that Lionel Groulx could be characterized as a living paradox, explaining that “for every theme and subtheme [Groulx] addressed throughout his long career, he put forward opinions that were divergent and incompatible, affirming both black and white.”⁴²³ Consequently, Bouchard extended this interpretation to Groulx’ historical works, describing how “on the one hand, [he wrote] as a visionary, a doctrinarian, a man of action, while on the other hand as a rigorous researcher, as a scientist. But in the decisive passages, the former would sustain and correct the latter.”⁴²⁴ Two elements in Bouchard’s characterization of Groulx need to be explained, as they are beneficial to illustrate how and why the neo-Thomist influence on nationalist perspective can help to shed new light on this traditional historiographical dilemma of nationalist historians as both objective and subjective in their works and practices.

First, it should be recognised that Bouchard does not completely deter from the traditional framework used to analyse nationalist historiography, as is clear by the fact that when assessing Groulx’s historical practice, he still concludes that in the important passages, Groulx’s philosophy of history (the man of action) would “sustain and correct” his historical scientific principles. Bouchard’s characterization of Groulx as a contradiction however can be considered as the most extreme outcome of the traditional framework, as it posits the absolute equality of philosophy of history and historical science in nationalist historiography. The use of the paradox-metaphor then is the logical conclusion that can be reached by maintaining the traditional framework whilst simultaneously acknowledging the overlap between the two supposed distinct disciplines.

However, by framing Groulx, and by extension French-Canadian nationalist historiography of this period, as a paradox, Bouchard fails to explain how and why nationalist historians did not see their own historiographical practice as ambivalent or as a contradiction. The contradiction can thus be seen as a validation for maintaining the traditional analytical framework (and distinction) but it can’t simultaneously provide an explanation as to why nationalist historians did not see a problem in combining the objective characteristics as defined by the historical science with the subjective elements of philosophy of history. This is an issue that the Flemish historian Marnix Beyen raised with regards to the Flemish nationalist historians, as he asked the question whether “it would be interesting to ascertain how in the historical works of these [nationalists] science and philosophy were reconciled,

⁴²³ Gérard Bouchard, *Les Deux Chanoines*, pp.12;4

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.195.

and to what extent they were, or weren't, influenced by external judgements on the history of their [Flemish] movement?"⁴²⁵

In this sense, neo-Thomism becomes a crucial element, as its emphasis on the congruence of philosophy and science can help to provide a new insight into the nature of nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders, without having to recourse to vague or ambivalent metaphors that adhere to the traditional historiographical framework. Moreover, by including the neo-Thomist philosophy and tenets in this analysis, it becomes possible to shed new light on the traditional dilemma of reconciling the subjective and objective elements of nationalist historiography, providing a new explanation as to why nationalist historians did not experience a problem or dilemma in reconciling the two supposedly distinct disciplines – philosophy of history and historical science – into one historiographical practice. The question that needs to be answered then is how exactly neo-Thomism provided the rationale and framework for nationalist historians to reconcile these two supposedly distinct disciplines.

III.II. Neo-Thomism and the congruence of philosophy and science

In the previous chapter, we concluded that there were three tenets that were of crucial importance to the neo-Thomist framework. One of these three was the neo-Thomist's emphasis on the congruence of (neo-Thomist) philosophy and science.⁴²⁶ As Maurice de Wulf explained, neo-Thomism or scholasticism "aims at submitting the great leading principles of medieval scholasticism to the control of the latest results of scientific progress."⁴²⁷ Two elements need to be explained in order to relate the neo-Thomist framework and the congruence of philosophy and science to the nationalist historiographical practices of Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century. On the one hand, it is imperative to explain what exactly the concept of science (and thus scientific) meant for the neo-Thomists, whilst on the other hand emphasise the importance of philosophy to incorporate and give meaning to the scientific discoveries and knowledge. Explaining these two elements, it will become clear that neo-Thomists defined science in general and broad terms so as to include a vast number of different specialized scientific disciplines. Moreover, it will become clear that the neo-Thomist emphasis on philosophy as a science itself led to the validation of the subjective role of the philosopher in the dissemination and incorporation of the different scientific disciplines.

III.II.I. Neo-Thomist concept of science

To understand how it was possible for neo-Thomists and nationalist historians to legitimate the congruence of science and philosophy in their works, it is first important to analyse what exactly the

⁴²⁵ Marnix Beyen. "Een Uitdijend Verhaal", pp. 29.

⁴²⁶ See page 116.

⁴²⁷ Maurice De Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New*, pp. 211.

concept of science entailed. To illustrate and emphasise the relevance and importance of science and scientific knowledge, Mercier first defined the nature of human knowledge. A first form of knowledge, he argued, “is *spontaneous*; it is knowledge begotten entirely through the things of nature stimulating the sense organs. As one thing gives place to another and they vary according to the chance of circumstances, the ideas they engender succeed one another correspondingly, thus being rather juxtaposed than connected according to any determined order.”⁴²⁸ This form of knowledge however was not scientific, as he explained that “science or proper knowledge begins only when all the fragmentary pieces of information relating to one object are connected and systematized, and thus the merely spontaneous activity of the mind is incapable of forming a science.”⁴²⁹ This is a first element that needs to be highlighted to understand the neo-Thomist emphasis on the congruence of philosophy and science. Mercier explains that for knowledge to be scientific, it needed to be “connected and systematized”, thus highlighting the necessity for a (subjective) mind that transcends the “spontaneous activity” to combine and give meaning to the different sets of data or discoveries. This was clear for example in Mercier’s description of what exactly a science entails, as he explained how

the formation of a science is attained by concentrating *reflective thought* upon some given object. The will has the power of controlling the exercise of the other faculties, and it can apply and hold the attention of the mind to the study of some one object, making it examine this under all its aspects until it has analysed as far as possible, and discovered its content through successive abstractions, in order afterwards to reunite its several notes in one total object. In this way a particular science comes into being.⁴³⁰

Two elements in this quote are crucial for the neo-Thomist framework and need to be further explained. First, Mercier’s emphasis on the element of “reflective thought” shows how a science, whatever its object, had to rely on a subject (i.e. an individual) to combine the data and attain, as he stated above, “proper knowledge”. This is apparent from the fact that Mercier deemed the element of “successive abstractions” as most crucial to the disposition of a science. Only by abstracting the collected data could a science attain knowledge that transcended the category of spontaneous knowledge, thereby legitimating the need for a subject capable of abstracting – i.e. the human researcher – so that it would become possible to ultimately obtain a deeper sense of the object that was being studied. The risk however remains that the objective data becomes completely subjective and thus useless, which is why, secondly, Mercier posit the concept of the will. An individual, according

⁴²⁸ Desire Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. 6.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., pp.7.

to Mercier, has the possibility to subvert its faculties to completely concentrate on a particular object. By positing the concept of the will, and its possibility to “hold the attention of the mind to the study of some one object”, Mercier believed it was possible to reduce the risk of a completely subjective interpretation of a particular object, as long as an individual’s will was capable of subverting his other faculties.

What is important to note however is that the suppression of an individual’s other faculties through his will did not entail the complete negation of the individual himself. This was apparent for example in Mercier’s discussion of the congruence of the Catholic faith and the scientific findings and proceedings, a debate that was also apparent amongst French-Canadian historians.⁴³¹ Mercier asked the question that “if the case should arise of an evident contradiction between faith and reason, must we abdicate the rights of reason?”⁴³² Answering the question, Mercier cited De Smedt, the Belgian Catholic historian who, as seen in Chapter I, played an influential role in French-Canadian historiography, and explained how

It may happen, we agree, that some fact asserted by historical documents of unquestionable authority seems at first sight to be in contradiction with the teachings of faith. But more attentive examination of the fact in question and the doctrine opposed to it soon reveals that there is no difficulty in reconciling them and that the supposed contradiction is in reality only the result of inaccurate knowledge of either or both.⁴³³

Mercier would further elaborate on De Smedt’s argument, indicating that “when it is not immediately apparent wherein lies the explanation of a seeming disagreement between what is put forward as of faith and what is put forward as a scientific conclusion, the prudent and wise Catholic scientist will for the time suspend his judgment and await with confidence for the real truth to be brought to light.”⁴³⁴ Two elements need to be further explained in Mercier’s and de Smedt’s arguments, as they will indicate the impossibility for Mercier and other neo-Thomists to completely negate the individual subject, which proved instrumental for the two cases’ nationalist historiography.

First of all, it is meaningful to point out the belief in the existence of a “Catholic scientist”. Similarly, French-Canadian historians did not see a contradiction in this element, as the Catholic historian Olivier Maurault for example posed the question during the 1925 history conference in Montreal if “there is a Catholic conception of history?”, illustrating the belief in the possibility of

⁴³¹ See in particular Olivier Maurault, ‘Y a-t-il une conception catholique de l’histoire?’

⁴³² Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. 24.

⁴³³ De Smedt, referenced in Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. 24; also see Charles De Smedt, *Principes De La Critique Historique* (Brussels: 1883).

⁴³⁴ Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. 24.

reconciling an individual's Catholic or national identity with the objective, scientific data.⁴³⁵ The most important element however is Mercier's emphasis on an individual's possibility to suspend his judgement until the "real truth" has been brought to light. What is crucial to note is that Mercier's characterization of the suspension of an individual's judgement does not entail the subversion of the subjective element in favour of the objective, scientific data as it has been collected at that particular moment. On the contrary, by portraying a dilemma between the subjective (i.e. Catholic faith) and objective (i.e. scientific data) as temporary, suggesting the "real truth" will ultimately be "brought to light", Mercier is able to maintain and legitimate the relevance of both sides. Mercier argues, on the one hand, that a Catholic can't discard the scientific evidence, even when it collides with his core beliefs and faith, whilst on the other hand he rejects the idea that a Catholic should abdicate his core values and faith for a scientific discovery. This can be related to the notion of interdependence between essence and existence discussed in the previous chapter, and how it is detrimental for an individual to reject his essence – i.e. Catholic faith – for a short-term existential gain – i.e. scientific discovery. Moreover, what is important to highlight in this neo-Thomist portrayal of science is that even when an individual is confronted with controversial scientific discoveries – in the case of historiography, historical documents – he can't reject his own subjective nature, which, as argued by neo-Thomists, plays an instrumental role in the process of abstraction that would subsequently constitute true scientific knowledge.

In addition to the importance of the subjective element for the constitution of scientific knowledge, Mercier described "the essential elements of science—principles, conclusions and the certainty of the evidence between them," and stated that, they are "independent of all Church authority," confirming that objective scientific knowledge and analysis is possible, as long as the individual researcher compels himself through his will to adhere to these three essential scientific elements.⁴³⁶ It is beneficial to further elaborate on these three notions in the neo-Thomist framework, as they are applicable to every science – including philosophy and history – and will help to frame the concept of scientific history in nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders. Describing the concept of principle, Mercier points out that "etymologically [it] means nothing more or less than 'beginning', something previous to something else," further elaborating that

ontological principles, or those from which things draw their origin, are exactly the same as causes, for a *cause* is whatever a thing is positively dependent upon either for its reality or for its coming into existence. When they are considered in relation to an intellect understanding or trying to understand

⁴³⁵ Olivier Maurault, 'Y a-t-il une conception catholique de l'histoire?', pp. 162-76.

⁴³⁶ Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. 22.

things, principles or causes are spoken of as *reasons*: they are then the answers to a mind's question 'Why reality is so'.⁴³⁷

What is clear in Mercier's description is that the first element that was applicable to all sciences is the concept of causality. Each science, Mercier argued, asks the question of causality, and how an object – however it is defined – has come into existence, and what are the underlying reasons to explain this particular state of reality. The second element, the conclusion, has been discussed above, as it relates to the process of abstraction that unites the different sets of data – the reasons or causes of an object – into one general framework. Mercier reiterated this principle when he explained how "every science, even a particular one, comprises the explanatory reasons of a certain number of things which have a common formal object. Hence that knowledge alone strictly merits the name of science which supplies the explanations of the things submitted to its examination. A science means, then, a synthetic view of its object."⁴³⁸ This characterization of every science as comprising a synthetic view is crucial to emphasise, as we will see later in the chapter how nationalist historians in both Quebec and Flanders would describe their historical science as intrinsically synthetic, thus reaffirming the element of the congruence of objectivity and subjectivity, as characterizing a science as synthetic stresses the need for an individual that is capable of abstracting the objective, scientific data.⁴³⁹

Finally, it is important to highlight and elaborate on Mercier's third element, the certainty of evidence, as it is instrumental for our analysis of the neo-Thomist influence on nationalist historiography. What is important to note is that the certainty of evidence was fundamental to legitimate the synthetic nature of all sciences, for if the evidence was objectively sound, the synthetic, subjective element would be necessary, yet remain limited. In addition to this principle, Mercier and the other neo-Thomists believed it was up to each particular science to define and determine how the certainty of evidence could be established.⁴⁴⁰ Mercier however would describe certain processes that were essential for all sciences to attain certain conclusions. He described how "a judgment, as opposed to the conclusion of an argument, is said to be *immediate*; and the conclusion of a reasoning process *mediate*."⁴⁴¹ This emphasis on the process of mediation is important to point out, as it legitimates a particular science's methodology and as such provides a rationale for the existence of objective (scientific) data from which the process of synthesis can occur. This is clear in Mercier's

⁴³⁷ Ibid., pp. 10.

⁴³⁸ Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. 9.

⁴³⁹ See Section III.III

⁴⁴⁰ As we will see in the following section, De Wulf's expertise in history of philosophy led to an emphasis on historical critique, as opposed to Nys's focus on energetics in the field of chemistry. It illustrates how the neo-Thomist philosophy and framework can be considered as malleable.

⁴⁴¹ Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. 37.

description of proof or demonstration, pointing out that “a reasoning-process which leads to a certain conclusion is a proof or *demonstration*,” further explaining that

Demonstration in the strict sense, however, requires something more than mere certain reasoning: it requires that the premises be based not on extrinsic considerations—which would be an extrinsic proof—nor upon the absurdity that would result from the conclusion being false, upon a reduction ad absurdum; but it requires that they be drawn from the analysis of the subject. This intrinsic, causal, a priori, [...] demonstration is the only one which in the Aristotelian terminology is strictly speaking *scientific*.⁴⁴²

By focusing on the intrinsic, a priori, analysis of a scientific subject, Mercier transfers the aforementioned discussion on the interdependence of essence and existence to the concept of science, as he indicates that the analysis of the intrinsic nature of the subject (i.e. the essence) is what constitutes the purely scientific process. Two elements need to be further explained with regards to this conceptualization. First, by portraying scientific analysis as contemplating the essence of an object and consequently scientific demonstration, Mercier provides a legitimation for the objectivity of the scientific subject and the (subjective) researcher that analyses said subject. What this means is that a scientific subject, due to its essence and the possibility to study this, can be analysed objectively, because its essence, and corresponding existence, are autonomous and independent from the researcher or scientist, thus making it possible, in Mercier’s strict sense, to have objective knowledge and proof.⁴⁴³

Secondly, by focusing on the analysis of the scientific subject as key requirement for the existence of objective scientific knowledge, Mercier allows for the possibility for each science to determine what exactly this analysis entails, and how objective knowledge of the scientific subject can be attained. This is apparent from the fact that the Belgian Catholic ascribed a crucial role to the concept of definitions in addition to demonstrations, as he explained how “demonstration presupposes premises; and it cannot be—if we are ever to arrive at a certain conclusion—that all the premises of a science should have to be demonstrated; there must be some which carry the evidence of their truth with them without needing proof and which serve as the formative principles of the science in question. The formulation of these principles for each science constitutes the initial *definitions* of that science.”⁴⁴⁴ This is a crucial element to keep in mind, as it will become clear that nationalist historians would define their own scientific discipline in a certain manner, and can be

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ As indicated earlier, neo-Thomists – in accordance with Thomist and Aristotelian philosophy – did not question the objectivity or intelligible existence of reality. See for example Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003); John Milbank, and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2000).

⁴⁴⁴ Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. 38.

considered as a first indication that the concept of what constituted scientific knowledge in nationalist historiography was influenced by this neo-Thomist framework.

Out of the analysis of the neo-Thomist conceptualization of science and scientific knowledge we can thus assess two elements that are crucial for our further analysis. First of all, the neo-Thomist characterization of all sciences as synthetic is crucial for nationalist historiography, as this description legitimates the necessity of a subjective component – i.e. the researcher who is able to reflect and synthesise – for the analysis of objective, scientific data. As we will see later, historians in both Flanders and Quebec defined their science as synthetic, and out of this characterization legitimated their own role as historian in the process of structuring and providing rationale for the objective, historical facts. Secondly, and as a result of the characterization of science as synthetic, neo-Thomists described a certain number of factors that were applicable to each science, and which legitimated a subjective element in the objective scientific process. Only by adhering to the three concepts outlined by Mercier – principles, conclusions and the certainty of evidence – would it be possible to obtain objective data whilst simultaneously having a subjective component in the overall process. As we will see, these three concepts would be defined and transformed by nationalist historians, providing an insight as to why it was possible for historians in Quebec and Flanders to proclaim a subjective element in their historical works whilst simultaneously adhering to the principle of scientific objective history. Before moving to the analysis of the nationalist historians, it is beneficial to first explain how neo-Thomists described the discipline of philosophy, as this characterization will further help to illustrate why neo-Thomists, and subsequently nationalist historians, believed it was possible, and even crucial, to have a subjective element in their scientific works.

III.II.II. Neo-Thomist history of philosophy

As we discussed briefly in the previous chapter, the distinction Mercier and other neo-Thomists made between science and philosophy is that “philosophy does not profess to be a particularized science, with a place *alongside* other such sciences and a restricted domain of its own for investigation; it comes *after* the particular sciences and ranks *above* them, dealing in an ultimate fashion with their respective objects.”⁴⁴⁵ Out of this characterization, we can immediately draw two elements. First, Mercier and other neo-Thomists regarded philosophy as the highest point in the hierarchy of knowledge, as it strove to incorporate the knowledge of the different scientific objects into one unified totality. In this sense, philosophy can be considered as the final step of the process of mediated conclusion and synthesis, as it aimed, just as every particular science did, to synthesise the different sets of objective data. This leads to the second element, namely that although philosophy did not

⁴⁴⁵ Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. 2.

profess to be a particularized science, neo-Thomists did believe that philosophy was a science and could thus produce scientific knowledge. This is illustrated clearly when Mercier argued that “philosophy is the comprehensive, or synthetic, explanation of things, and may be defined as *the science or understanding of all things through their simplest and most general reasons*. As the knowledge of the simplest and most general reasons requires the greatest degree of mental penetration, the definition may be resolved into: *The science of all things through their ultimate or deepest reasons*.”⁴⁴⁶

This definition of philosophy as a science is important to further analyse in depth, as it gives an insight into how nationalist historians would adapt this framework, and the rationale behind it, for their own historiographical practices. By characterizing philosophy as a science, Mercier would ascribe the same qualifications to philosophy as he would to any other science. Consequently, the Belgian Catholic explained that

philosophy is a science. It is therefore opposed to: (a) *spontaneous* intellectual knowledge, which gets scarcely beyond the surface of things and does not centre in a systematic way around any one object. [...] it limits itself to the mere registration of facts without looking for any explanation of them, (b) It is opposed to *belief* and *historical* knowledge. 'To know' {*scire*, science) is not to accept on the authority of another but to have a personal understanding, (c) Lastly it is opposed to *uncertain, conjectural* knowledge: for science implies *certitude*.⁴⁴⁷

Two elements are crucial in this description. First, Mercier characterized philosophy using the three principles outlined earlier, and was thus able to portray it as a scientific discipline, thereby providing an example of the adaptability of the neo-Thomist framework. There is however a second point that needs addressing which would otherwise lead to a misreading of how nationalist historians were influenced by the neo-Thomist framework, and that is the distinction Mercier makes between philosophy as scientific knowledge as opposed to historical knowledge and belief. Mercier's distinction at first glance provides a problem for historians, and as we will see will be addressed by nationalist historians both in Quebec and Flanders, as it suggests that historical knowledge, and per consequence the historical science, can never be scientific, as it must always rely on some other authority than the individual researcher himself. To get a better understanding of how history was still validated by neo-Thomists as a proper science, it is instrumental to look at the writings of Maurice de Wulf, who would

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 8.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

legitimate the existence of a historical science in his manual *Scholasticism old and new*.⁴⁴⁸ De Wulf, as a specialist in the history of philosophy, recognized the troubled relation between neo-Thomist philosophy and the historical science, and described how “within the last fifty years history has taken such an important place among higher studies that we must define exactly the attitude of contemporary scholasticism towards this particular department of scientific research.”⁴⁴⁹

Out of this characterization we can immediately assess that De Wulf did consider history a scientific discipline, as he described the study as “a particular department of scientific research.” Moreover, De Wulf would further elaborate on the nature of historical research and explained how “historical research is in no small measure the outcome of the irresistible craving for knowledge which is so characteristic of our time, and which has been the mainspring of the natural, as it now is of the historical sciences.”⁴⁵⁰ It is important to note that De Wulf made no distinction between the natural and historical sciences by arguing that they all contribute to the establishment of (objective) knowledge. In this sense, De Wulf provided an important addendum to Mercier’s distinction, and helps to understand how historical knowledge can still be considered as scientific based on this element. This is clear for example in De Wulf’s legitimation for the existence of his specialization, history of philosophy, by arguing that “the study of the history of philosophy, like the study of any other science, is a department of the general search after truth; and that alone is enough to justify its existence.”⁴⁵¹ By positing the “general search after truth” as the first and foremost characterization for what constitutes a science, De Wulf is able to legitimate on the one hand Mercier’s distinction between philosophical and historical knowledge, whilst on the other hand provides a rational framework for the existence of the historical sciences as scientific.⁴⁵²

In addition to this nuanced definition of historical knowledge, De Wulf’s legitimation for the existence of discipline of history of philosophy allows us to highlight how the neo-Thomist framework, with its emphasis on synthesis and certainty of evidence and conclusions, envisioned its adaptation to

⁴⁴⁸ In this sense, De Wulf and Mercier’s divergence on the nature of historical knowledge illustrates how the neo-Thomist general concept of science could be interpreted differently, indicating its malleable nature once more.

⁴⁴⁹ Maurice De Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New*, pp. 182.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² In this sense, De Wulf aligns himself with the general convention of the historical practice in positing that the historical facts (and history in general) constituted an objective truth. See Georg Iggers, 'The Intellectual Foundations of Nineteenth-Century 'Scientific' History: The German Model', in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, ed. by Stuart Macintyre, Juan Miguashca and Attila Pók (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 41-57.

the historical sciences. A first indication is De Wulf's characterization of historical facts, and their relation to the process of synthesis. The historian explained how

every human fact in past history possesses its own proper interest; for it may one day become an important item in some great work of systematization. And if it has any connection, remote or proximate, with philosophical connections, it may account more or less fully for the influence of some personality in the formation or filiation of systems, or for the effects of a certain trend of thought on a given state of society, and so for several other things.⁴⁵³

Out of this description, it is possible to distil three major principles that will prove to be instrumental to the nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders, whilst simultaneously showing the relevance of the neo-Thomist framework.

The first principle is the symbiosis of objective historical facts with the necessity for a subjective synthesis or systematization, thus blurring the distinctiveness of the traditional historical scientific discipline's emphasis on objectivity (see Appendix 7). De Wulf put emphasis on the process of systematization, and the need of "some personality" to form the system, and as such concurs with the neo-Thomist's stress on the process of mediation as a crucial factor for the foundation of scientific knowledge. However, as explained earlier, De Wulf recognized the need for objective historical facts as the basis for the process of systematization, and made this clear when he explained that "the general search after truth [...] justifies us in expecting from the historian of philosophy the full use of those critical methods which the second half of the nineteenth century has proved to be indispensable for the scientific study of history."⁴⁵⁴ De Wulf's characterization of how historical facts should be analysed and systematized is an important element to highlight, as he put emphasis on the necessity for historical critique – a notion that will be reiterated by nationalist historians – in order to scientifically systematize the facts into a historical work, thereby reducing the risk of a completely subjective interpretation. Moreover, the symbiosis between the objective nature of historical facts analysed via the historical scientific method – i.e. historical critique – and the subjective process of systematization highlights how the traditional portrayal of scientific history fails to take this symbiosis into account, and what it meant for nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders during this period.⁴⁵⁵

The distinctive nature of the neo-Thomist framework, and its emphasis on the symbiosis of the subjective and objective elements becomes very clear when De Wulf criticized contemporary,

⁴⁵³ De Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New*, pp. 182.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 182-183.

⁴⁵⁵ For an outline of this portrayal, see Herman Paul, 'Distance and Self-Distanciation', pp. 104-16; Herman Paul, 'The Heroic Study of Records: The Contested Persona of the Archival Historian', *History of the Human Sciences*, 26 (2013), pp. 67-83.

modern historians. In his overview of the history of philosophy, De Wulf criticized the traditional Scholastic scholars for not taking into account the historical scientific method, arguing that this led to “a want of exactness in registering the historical fact as such, a certain carelessness in attributing an opinion or a text to its real author, looseness and consequent inaccuracy of quotation, etc.”⁴⁵⁶ This critique reaffirms De Wulf’s emphasis on the prevalence of the nineteenth century historical science in the constitution of historical scientific knowledge, and highlights once more the need, as stressed by neo-Thomists, for a scientific, objective analysis of the facts. However, De Wulf subsequently criticized the contemporary historians, and it is in this criticism that we can see the unique framework of the neo-Thomists, and its relevance for the nationalist historians. De Wulf explained that while the medieval scholars lacked the historical scientific method necessary to constitute objective historical facts, he explained that this lack was the result of “history [being] regarded as serving another purpose: as embodying for us the soul of truth contained in every philosophical system.”⁴⁵⁷ De Wulf stressed that this notion of searching for the general truth in the historical fact was “of the first importance from the medieval point of view”, and it is based on this principle that De Wulf structured his criticism of modern historiography.⁴⁵⁸ Where the medieval scholars lacked the historical scientific principles in favour of a philosophical, subjective generalization, De Wulf believed the opposite occurred in his own time, with historians stressing the particular and objective over the general and subjective. De Wulf explained how

most of our modern historians of philosophy have no philosophical convictions themselves and are careful not to have any. [...] The majority are reluctant to commit themselves to any even moderately comprehensive system, because the world of thought is perhaps more than ever a prey to contradictions, and perhaps, too, because it is not always easy to square one’s life with one’s principles – especially if these be of a dogmatic and decided character. Hence it is that nowadays we so commonly find an easy-going sort of scepticism supplanting all conviction, and that instead of trying to build up some system or other of philosophy for themselves so many are content with criticizing the systems of others.⁴⁵⁹

Two elements out of this characterization need to be further explained. First of all, although De Wulf legitimated the necessity of the neo-Thomist philosophy in his description, he left open the possibility that other systems could also be legitimated, as long as they were based on the conviction of the subjective researcher: “to square one’s life with one’s principles” is a crucial principle in this conceptualization, as it allows for the possibility, as we will see later, of supplanting the neo-Thomist

⁴⁵⁶ De Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New*, pp. 183.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ De Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New*, pp. 183-184.

principles – the core of De Wulf’s argument – with nationalist principles – the essence of the nationalist historians – whilst simultaneously maintaining the tenets of the neo-Thomist framework and its conceptualization of what constitutes scientific history. This emphasis on the necessity of a subject to align his philosophical system with his essential principles (whether they are neo-Thomist or nationalist) illustrates how the neo-Thomists attempted to find a symbiosis between the particular (i.e. the historical science) on the one hand, whilst on the other hand stressed the necessity to generalize the objective data and facts borne out of the historical enquiry.

Secondly, it is important to emphasise that this symbiosis posed no problem for De Wulf and other neo-Thomists, who saw this congruence – contrary to the traditional distinction – of history and philosophy (of history) as a benefit rather than an obstruction to produce scientific historical works. Concluding his comparison between medieval and modern historians, De Wulf argued that “the two principal reasons for the study of the history of philosophy – the reasons just referred to – so far from excluding, actually supplement and complete each other; and both alike will have their weight with the scholastics of the twentieth century.”⁴⁶⁰ In a similar fashion, the Irish neo-Thomist Peter Coffey who had also translated the works of Mercier and De Wulf in English, explained that

if the traditional exponents of Scholasticism had only attended a little to its history the Neo-Scholastics [neo-Thomists] of today would not have experienced so much trouble in giving to the world the authentic philosophical teaching of the thirteenth century, —nor so much opposition in proclaiming an alliance between it and the findings of modern science. Unfortunately, historical studies had not been in vogue in any department of learning.⁴⁶¹

Coffey’s remarks on the congruence of historical studies and philosophy, and the benefit it has over emphasizing a distinct approach for the two, leads to the third and final element that is apparent from De Wulf’s general characterization of the history of philosophy. Contrary to the traditional modern historians, De Wulf and other neo-Thomists such as Coffey did believe that history had a present and future purpose. In this sense, neo-Thomists rejected Ranke’s aforementioned admonition to “not aspire to such a lofty undertaking” of judging the past and instructing the present and future, instead focusing on how the teachings of the past could prove beneficial for the future.⁴⁶² In this sense, De Wulf’s explanation that “every human fact in past history possesses its own proper interest” and could be used in a philosophical system when necessary is crucial to analyse further, as it proved influential for the nationalist historiographical practices of Quebec and Flanders.⁴⁶³ By describing the historical

⁴⁶⁰ De Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New*, pp. 184.

⁴⁶¹ Peter Coffey, 'Philosophy and the Sciences at Leuven', *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 17 (1905), pp. 400; For more on Coffey, see Hugh Bredin, 'Coffey, Peter', pp. 150.

⁴⁶² See footnote 413.

⁴⁶³ See footnote 453

fact as possessing its own interest, De Wulf's characterization entailed two consequences for the practice of nationalist historiography. First, the definition aligned the past, present and future as it allowed for the malleability of the historical fact into a general system. As De Wulf explained, a fact could prove influential in the "formation or filiation of systems, or for the effects of a certain trend of thought on a given state of society", thus stating the relevance certain facts can have in present times.⁴⁶⁴ This relevance of the past for the present was further illustrated in the neo-Thomist motto *vetera novis augere* [the past invigorates the present] which was further explained by Peter Coffey who described how "they [neo-Thomists of Leuven] come forth fearlessly into the twentieth century with their combined treasures of medieval wisdom and modern science. From those treasures they bring forth the *nova et vetera*."⁴⁶⁵

Secondly, the emphasis on the malleability of historical facts, and the notion that they serve a purpose in a specific context also had an unintended consequence, and would prove instrumental for the nationalist historians. By positing the historical fact as having its own interest, De Wulf and other neo-Thomists left open the possibility of different approaches and interpretations of one particular historical fact in a number of different systematizations.⁴⁶⁶ In this sense, the neo-Thomist interpretation and framework were only one of myriad systems that could benefit from a historical analysis. De Wulf himself concurs with this notion when he argued that "any system of philosophy is bound to derive the greatest possible advantages from the criticism and control of an historical audit."⁴⁶⁷ The consequence of this point of view is that the objectively constituted historical facts needed to be reinterpreted time again in different historical contexts, and as such, certain frameworks or interpretations of history could become obsolete or replaced. What this meant was that the emphasis on the malleability of the historical fact allowed for the possibility to adapt the neo-Thomist interpretation of history into a nationalist historiography, whilst maintaining the concepts and definitions of history and science that were outlined by the neo-Thomist framework. Understanding then that each generation had to reinterpret the historical facts, which themselves were objective, highlights the alignment of the past with the present and how this conceptualization of history and the historical facts stressed the necessity of a subject (i.e. the historian) to interpret the historical facts in accordance with their contemporary context.

⁴⁶⁴ De Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New*, pp. 184.

⁴⁶⁵ Peter Coffey, 'Philosophy and the Sciences at Leuven', pp. 407-408.

⁴⁶⁶ This can help to explain why Flemish nationalist historians could legitimate alternating the national frameworks in which they analysed Flemish history. See for example Maarten Van Ginderachter, and Geneviève Warland, 'How Regional, National, and Transnational History Has (Not) Been Written in Belgium: Reflections within a European Perspective', in *Transnational Challenges to National History Writing*, ed. by Matthias Middell and Lluís Roura (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 404-22.

⁴⁶⁷ De Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New*, pp. 183.

Taking into account the three essential principles in De Wulf's and other neo-Thomists' characterization of the history of philosophy, it is possible to provide a new insight to the traditional distinction between philosophy of history and the historical science as outlined in Appendix 7. What has been illustrated via the neo-Thomist conceptualization is that they legitimated a symbiosis of the notions that historians traditionally defined as distinct or isolated. This is one of the reasons why neo-Thomists such as De Wulf criticized the "modern historians" of his time, and illustrates the relevance of the neo-Thomist framework in analysing and providing new insights to the dilemma of nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders. The benefit and importance of the neo-Thomist framework is that it allows to dissolve the distinctive lines between philosophy of history and the historical science, and to look at how this philosophy provided nationalist historians with the concepts, rationale, and legitimation to present their work from a highly subjective (nationalist) point of view whilst simultaneously claiming to objectively analyse the historical facts and thus present their work as scientific. The question now that needs to be asked is how exactly the principles outlined in the previous two sections were adapted into the nationalist historiographies, and whether there was a difference in interpretation of what constituted scientific history between nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders.

III.III. Nationalist scientific history: a paradox or logical consequence?

Having outlined and analysed the key tenets that constituted the congruence of science and philosophy in the neo-Thomist framework, it is now possible to see how exactly this framework influenced nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century. Throughout this analysis, two major arguments will be made. First, it will be argued that nationalist historians adhered to the specific outlook and characterization of the neo-Thomists with regards to the symbiosis of objectivity and subjectivity in their works. Nationalist historians, it will be argued, used the concepts outlined by neo-Thomists to legitimate their nationalist interpretation of history whilst simultaneously proclaiming their work to be scientific. This leads to the second argument. It will become clear throughout this analysis that the neo-Thomist framework was adapted into a nationalist historiographical setting, illustrating the changing political and nationalist contexts during the first decades of the twentieth century.

III.III.I. The neo-Thomist influence on the nationalist historiographies

It is beneficial for the analysis of the neo-Thomist influence on the historiographical practices of both regions to commence with how nationalist historians envisioned history, as the key principles related to the neo-Thomist influence will become clear. "History", the Flemish historian Hendrik Elias wrote,

is a constant practice of construction and destruction. The many labourers who work on this enormous site bring forward the materials necessary for this great construct: they search and sort, separate the

illusion from the real, the fakes from the truth, the phantasm from reality. Their labour is permanent because they present the facts in their essential truth, as simple data that has been processed by the strict rules of [historical] critique. But that labour is also inanimate. It is like the many preliminary studies and sketches of an artist before he brings them to life in the harmonic animation of his tableau [...] That is because synthesis is the life of history. It coverts the myriad, single facts to their true value and meaning.⁴⁶⁸

In a similar fashion, Lionel Groulx described how

in history, we do not believe in definitive works. The historian that knows his metier, knows to be modest. 'Nobody can fully grasp history' Godefroid Kurth said, that old master who had nonetheless claimed 'to have grown old in front of the charters.' In front of the numerous piles of documents for which a reading of all of it would demand an innumerable amount of human lives, one can't ask more from a researcher than a loyal investigation, which consists of making many choices and having a large amount of intuition and an absolute integrity.⁴⁶⁹

These two descriptions of what history entailed for nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders form the basis of the analysis as they illustrate the nationalist historians' conceptualization of history and how it can be directly related to the neo-Thomist framework. Two elements need to be further analysed to illustrate the relevance of the framework.

III.III.I.I. Objectivity: Historical critique

The first element that shows the neo-Thomist influence is the symbiosis between objective facts and the need for subjective systematization that was at the core of the neo-Thomist conceptualization of what constitutes a scientific discipline. In this sense, nationalist historians in both Quebec and Flanders adhered to the principles that were defined by neo-Thomists as essential characteristics of a science. Consequently, two principles are crucial to explain: on the one hand, the adherence to the concepts outlined by Mercier as to what constitutes a science – principles, conclusions and the certainty of evidence – and on the other hand the neo-Thomist emphasis on the necessity of systematization and the synthetic nature of science, as it was argued that without the process of mediation and abstraction the objective data and the principles of what constitutes a science would remain useless.

The debate on the scientific nature of historical knowledge had already been waged between neo-Thomists themselves, as was illustrated by the distinction between De Wulf and Mercier, with the latter claiming historical knowledge which was based on another person's authority rendered it unscientific.⁴⁷⁰ Consequently, nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders would have to question and legitimate the validity of historical knowledge themselves. The French-Canadian archivist and

⁴⁶⁸ Hendrik Elias, *Het Nationaal Gevoel*, pp. 323.

⁴⁶⁹ Lionel Groulx, *Vers l'émancipation*, pp.7.

⁴⁷⁰ See Sections III.I.II.-III.I.III.

historian abbé Scott for example asked if “there [is] an efficient method to attain the goal [of historical validity] and give the writings, if not an absolute certainty (which is impossible in these disciplines) then at least a moral certainty that everyone of good spirit can be satisfied with?”⁴⁷¹ To answer this question and legitimate the validity and objectivity of historical knowledge, nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders would adapt the principles outlined by Mercier and other neo-Thomists, so as to provide a rationale for their historiographical framework. In this sense, the definition of Laferrière on what constitutes scientific history is a perfect starting point, as it immediately highlights how historians in both regions envisioned the adaptation of the general neo-Thomist tenets.

The French-Canadian historian first outlined the dilemma that the historical science had with regards to the scientific nature of its discipline, explaining that “history is not alone in its dilemma. A range of recently founded sciences – including geology, astrophysics and comparative philology don’t have the right to bear the name of science, because they don’t correspond with the classical definition.”⁴⁷² The classical definition, in which, according to Laferrière, science is defined as “the knowledge of things via their causes,” had become outdated for the French-Canadian historian, arguing that the definition “dates from a time when only philosophy was considered a science.”⁴⁷³ The solution, according to Laferrière, was to “enlarge the framework and adopt a definition that was capable of including all [the sciences].”⁴⁷⁴ It is in Laferrière’s definition that we can see a first indication of the influence of neo-Thomism on these historians, and how they transformed the neo-Thomist notions into their historiographical frameworks. Laferrière described how

Father Castelein proposes to define science as *every well-reasoned system of certain knowledges that are related to a defined object*. We prefer this definition that perfectly puts history at ease. History is, indeed, a well-thought out system via the logical order and classification of its understandings; it has a proper object which is humanity’s past, and ultimately imposes certainty on our understandings. This certainty is the essential point, because it is because of this that a science exists: it determines the character of the science.⁴⁷⁵

Out of this characterization it is possible to analyse two elements in relation to the neo-Thomist influence on nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders. The first element is Laferrière’s reference to Father Auguste Castelein. Auguste Castelein [Casteleyn] was born on November 22, 1840

⁴⁷¹ H.A. Scott, 'Matériaux De L’histoire: Choix Et Critique', in *Semaine D’histoire Au Canada. Compte Rendu Et Mémoires/Première Session Tenue À La Bibliothèque Saint-Sulpice À Montréal, Du 23 Au 27 Novembre 1925* (1925), pp.132.

⁴⁷² Éric Bédard, and Julien Goyette, *Parole D’historiens*, pp. 62.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

and can be considered as part of the neo-Thomist network. Casteleyn contributed to the revival of the Thomist philosophy during the second half of the nineteenth century, in particular via his teachings at the *Faculté Notre Dame de la Paix* in Namur on logic and methodology, which was published as *Logique: logique formelle, critériologie, méthodologie* (1901) and which was also part of Groulx's private library.⁴⁷⁶ Laferrière's reliance on Casteleyn can then be considered as an indication of the French-Canadian reliance on the neo-Thomists to conceptualize and rationalize history as a practice and as a science. Moreover, Casteleyn's definition of what constitutes a science is in accordance with the principles that were outlined above. First, the emphasis on a "well-reasoned system" shows the necessity of mediation and systematization that was the foundation of the concept of science in the neo-Thomist framework. Secondly, the characterization of a "defined object" highlights the neo-Thomists' concepts that are shared amongst researchers and that define a science. In this sense, the description is related to Mercier's concept of premises or definitions "which serve as the formative principles of the science in question", and as such, Laferrière's argument that the "proper object" of history is "humanity's past" can be considered the most foundational definition of the historical discipline.⁴⁷⁷ Finally, the necessity of certainty as the basis of knowledge corresponds with the neo-Thomists's emphasis on the notion of the certainty of evidence, as it was argued by Mercier that "science implies *certitude*."⁴⁷⁸

It is this emphasis on the necessity of certainty of evidence as the basis for scientific knowledge that would play an important role in the definition of history in both cases. As Laferrière described himself, certainty is the "essential point" because it "determines the character of a science".⁴⁷⁹ Consequently, this meant that the method which would provide the historical discipline with the certainty of evidence – and thus scientific and objective data – would be at the core of the discipline, and would have to be accepted as one of the key principles or definitions of the discipline. In the case of history, this role was ascribed to the notion of historical critique, and the adherence by nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders to this concept shows that it was a shared principle amongst the historical practice in general.⁴⁸⁰ Leo van der Essen for example, in his teaching manual titled *Historical Critique* [Historische Kritiek], explained how "historical critique is the research on the value of the testimony of a source. History then can be conducted: either scientifically by the historical

⁴⁷⁶ L. Willaert, 'Casteleyn, Auguste', in *Biographie Nationale. Tome Trentième* ed. by lettres et beaux-arts Academie Royale des sciences (Brussels: Établissements Emile Bruylant, 1958), pp. 269-70; Fondation Lionel Groulx, *Bibliothèque Lionel Groulx: Catalogue Des Livres* (2011).

⁴⁷⁷ Éric Bédard, and Julien Goyette, *Parole D'historiens*, pp. 62.

⁴⁷⁸ See Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. 8.

⁴⁷⁹ Éric Bédard, and Julien Goyette, *Parole D'historiens*, pp. 62.

⁴⁸⁰ See Georg Iggers, 'The Intellectual Foundations of Nineteenth-Century 'Scientific' History ', pp. 41-57.

adept (he treats all sources critically) or unscientifically by the amateur (he makes no distinction in the value and use of his sources).⁴⁸¹ Van der Essen, who was acquainted with both De Wulf and Mercier, put a clear emphasis on the role of historical critique to address the issue raised by Mercier regarding the scientific nature of testimonies, and concluded that by adhering to the notion of critique – as opposed to the amateur – it was possible to acquire scientific data in history. In a similar sense, the French-Canadian Catholic historian Olivier Maurault addressed the issue and emphasised the necessity of historical critique as basic premise of the discipline, describing how “critique of texts is one of the most delicate and difficult tasks for the historian. Habitually, one can’t write [history] without relying on intermediaries who themselves were eyewitnesses or who themselves passed on other testimonies. There are rules that determine the value of such testimonies based on their morality, independence and unanimity.”⁴⁸²

What is important to note in these descriptions on the role of historical critique is that they were the conventional practice of that time. In Langlois and Seignobos’s seminal *Introduction aux études historiques*, the two French historians explained how “the detailed analysis of the reasonings which lead from the inspection of documents to the knowledge of facts is one of the chief parts of Historical Methodology. It is the domain of criticism.”⁴⁸³ Langlois and Seignobos would further elaborate on this principle, explaining how after the process of critique a document comes “to a point where it resembles the data of the objective sciences: it becomes an observation; it only remains to treat it by the methods of the objective sciences. Every document is valuable precisely to the extent to which, by the study of its origin, it has been reduced to a well-made observation.”⁴⁸⁴ It is however in the two French historians’ treatment of the nature of a document (and subsequently a historical fact) that we can assess the difference between the nationalist historiographies and the traditional historiographical practices, and highlight the influence of the neo-Thomist framework.

By characterizing the goal of historical critique as the reduction of documents to “well-made observations”, Langlois and Seignobos ascribed a very limited role to the subjective historian, thereby differing from the neo-Thomist principle of prominently including the subjective notion. It is in this sense beneficial to briefly compare the description of chemistry by the two French historians on the one hand and the neo-Thomist chemist Désiré Nys on the other hand, as it gives an insight as to how both envisioned science and the relation between the objective data and the subjective researcher. Langlois and Seignobos explained how

⁴⁸¹ Leo Van der Essen, *Historische Kritiek*, pp.2.

⁴⁸² Éric Bédard, and Julien Goyette, *Parole D’historiens*, pp. 72.

⁴⁸³ Charles-Victor Langlois, and Charles Seignobos, *Introduction to the Study of History*, pp. 65.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 67.

the historian is in a very disagreeable situation. It is not merely that he cannot, as the chemist does, observe his facts directly; it very rarely happens that the documents which he is obliged to use represent precise observations. He has at his disposal none of those systematic records of observations which, in the established sciences, can and do replace direct observation. He is in the situation of a chemist who should know a series of experiments only from the report of his laboratory-boy.⁴⁸⁵

Chemistry in this description was represented as the prime example of the exact sciences, as it is a science that can rely on direct observation to establish objective facts and has the benefit of an objective corpus of guidelines that affirm the objective nature of observations not influenced by the researcher himself. Consequently, chemistry as a discipline has a limited input of subjectivity, as the chemist is restricted by the discipline's methodology to conduct his experiments and, as such, a process of abstraction or systematization of the objective facts by a subjective individual is not required. This lack of subjective input in chemistry, and the exact sciences in general, is exactly the point of critique Nys raised against his colleagues. Nys criticized his colleagues because they, according to him, limited their work to "synthesizing their experimental findings, classify them, and express through mathematical formulas their relation, order of succession and effects," which was exactly the point Langlois and Seignobos made to argue that chemistry, compared to history, had an advantage when it came to limiting any subjective input.⁴⁸⁶ Moreover, Nys would emphasise the necessity of a subjective, philosophical abstraction of the objective data, asking the question whether "it [is] desirable that in the interest of science and philosophy that physics [...] abstains itself from taking up a position or judgement on the constitution of the properties of matter? We don't believe it is."⁴⁸⁷

The difference between the two characterizations of the method and practice of chemistry and the exact sciences in general is in its definition of what constitutes an objective fact, a feat that would be of crucial importance for nationalist historians.⁴⁸⁸ Langlois and Seignobos adhered to the notion of a fact as an observation whose intrinsic value is based on the observation itself. Consequently, the fact in itself did not have any value or interests: it merely exists with the grace of the observation that established its value. What this means is that history, despite its limited methodology compared to the exact sciences, still needed to adhere to this principle; a historian, through its critique of the texts, determines the validity of the documents and historical facts, and presents them as observations as would a chemist, meaning that there is a system of observation and

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ D. Nys, 'L'énergétique Et La Théorie Scolastique', pp. 10.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ For more on the nature of the historical fact, see Aviezer Tucker, *Our Knowledge of the Past. A Philosophy of Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1-22; Peter Kosso, 'Philosophy of Historiography', in *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, ed. by Aviezer Tucker (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 9-25.

hierarchy that ranks the different facts based on their objectively established validity, and formulates their relation and order of succession. It is exactly this conceptualization of history nationalist historians would reject, as they would argue, in accordance with the neo-Thomist principle, that a fact held a proper, intrinsic interest, and that there was an instrumental necessity of abstraction and systematization in the historical science.

III.III.I.II. The necessity of subjective synthesis

The consequence of the neo-Thomist influence is that nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders would emphasise the objective nature of historical facts, whilst simultaneously stressing the necessity of the historian to synthesize the data, as it would otherwise remain useless. This is clear for example in Elias's description of what constitutes history. Elias, as the historiographical convention would dictate, stressed the necessity of historical critique to "present the facts in their essential truth, as simple data that has been processed by the strict rules of [historical] critique", thus confirming the conventional belief of the historiographical practice that it was possible to attain objective data through the method of historical critique.⁴⁸⁹ However, Elias, as would other nationalist historians in both Quebec and Flanders, believed that "that labour is also inanimate," thus criticizing historians such as Langlois and Seignobos who limited the historical practice to the process of classification and systematization, arguing that "synthesis is the life of history. It coverts the myriad, single facts to their true value and meaning."⁴⁹⁰ In a similar manner, the French-Canadian historian and archivist Ivanhoe Caron explained how "the grand history is not formed by the arrangement of a number of facts: it demands something more. Writing history consists of painting a picture of human life in a place and defined population."⁴⁹¹ It is interesting to note that both Caron and Elias, when discussing the nature of history, referred to the practice of painting, as Elias explained how history before the process of synthesis is "like the many preliminary studies and sketches of an artist before he brings them to life in the harmonic animation of his tableau."⁴⁹² Moreover, both Caron and Elias criticized the portrayal of history by historians such as Langlois and Seignobos on the basis that a fact is not merely an observation, but had to be considered as a stepping stone to a general systematization. Consequently, historians in both Quebec and Flanders relied on the neo-Thomist definition of facts as constituting their proper interest, resulting in an important emphasis on the role of the historian who was crucial in synthesizing and comprising the different objective facts into a larger framework. This emphasis on

⁴⁸⁹ Hendrik Elias, *Het Nationaal Gevoel*, pp. 323.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Ivanhoe Caron, *Les Monographies: Leur Rôle, Leur Caractère* (Quebec: 1926), pp. 4; For more on Caron, see Yves Hébert, 'Ivanhoë Caron, Historien De Saint-Jean-Baptiste', *Cap-aux-Diamants*, 2 (1986), pp. 35-36.

⁴⁹² Hendrik Elias, *Het Nationaal Gevoel*, pp. 323.

the subjective necessity in the historical process, and its relation to the objective facts, has had two major consequences on the nationalist historiographical practices in Quebec and Flanders.

The first consequence of the emphasis on the necessity of a subjective individual to systematize and synthesise the objective data was that an entirely objective historical practice was unfeasible. Because of the prerequisite of a subjective historian to synthesize the different individual facts, historians in both Quebec and Flanders concluded that an absolute objective history was not feasible, and not recommended, as it ignored the crucial role of the historian in the historical process. The amateur Flemish nationalist historian Jan Brans, who had studied law at the Catholic University Leuven during the interwar period, wrote in his work *History and Politics* (1937) that “the historian who thinks he is objective is either a man of evil intent or a fool. We are never, nor will we ever be truly objective.”⁴⁹³ The result of this argument that history could never be “truly objective” was the legitimization of the subjective role of the historian in the process of history, as is clear by the nationalist historians’ emphasis on the concept of impartiality, and its difference from the principle of neutrality. Moreover, it is via this concept of impartiality that we can assess the transformation of the traditional neo-Thomist framework into a national historiography.

It should be noted first that the concept of impartiality has already been widely discussed in secondary literature in recent decades. Historians such as Chris Lorenz have described the interconnectedness between the national state and historians, and the implied underlying notion that the institution of the archive – which was considered impartial – provided the historians with the objective data that had to be treated and analysed impartially.⁴⁹⁴ The emphasis by nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders on the concept of impartiality is thus not novel, and should be seen as part of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century (Western) historiographical practice.⁴⁹⁵ There are however two important nuances that have to be highlighted, as they illustrate the specific influence of the neo-Thomist framework on the two national historiographies, and show how these two historiographical practices constituted a unique transformation of the traditional historiographical concepts due to the neo-Thomist influence. The first nuance is apparent from the nationalist historians’ distinction between the notion of neutrality and impartiality.

⁴⁹³ Jan Brans, *Geschiedenis En Politiek* (Antwerp: Standaard Boekhandel, 1937), pp.9.

⁴⁹⁴ Chris Lorenz, 'Scientific Historiography', in *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, ed. by Aviezer Tucker (Chichester: Blackwell-Wiley, 2009), pp. 393-403; Kasper Risbjerg Eskildsen, 'Inventing the Archive: Testimony and Virtue in Modern Historiography', *History of the Human Sciences*, 26 (2013), pp. 8-26; Pieter Huistra, Herman Paul, and Jo Tollebeek, 'Historians in the Archive: An Introduction', *History of the Human Sciences*, 26 (2013), pp. 1-6; Jacques Derrida, and Eric Prenowitz, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression', *Diacritics*, 25 (1995), 9-63.

⁴⁹⁵ See Herman Paul, 'Distance and Self-Distanciation', pp. 104-16.

By distinguishing between impartiality and neutrality, nationalist historians in both Quebec and Flanders were able to legitimate their own subjective perspective and interpretation of history. Groulx for example explained how “we do not confuse impartiality with neutrality. History is a moral act and therefore not free from ulterior purposes. It is our ambition and our right to write and teach as a Catholic and a French Canadian. The historian has to work and think with his entire personality.”⁴⁹⁶ In a similar way, Elias legitimated a subjective perspective in history by arguing that “‘partiality’ and ‘formulating an opinion’ are two completely different concepts. The first is the negation of all historical knowledge, the second a necessity for whoever wants to surpass the amateurism of an archaeological survey or the difficult endeavour of putting together the ‘disjecta membra’ [scattered fragments] of his historical critique.”⁴⁹⁷ What is important to highlight in the distinction between neutrality and impartiality is that by distinguishing between the two notions, nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders legitimated their own nationalist perspective on history as an essential necessity to constitute scientific history. In this sense, we can see the continuation of the neo-Thomist debate on the complexity between Catholic faith and scientific data – and the possible paradox it at first glance supposed – transferred to the nationalist historiographical framework. Groulx’s argument that he had the “right to write and teach as a Catholic and a French Canadian” can be considered as an adaptation of the argument made by Belgian Catholics – illustrated earlier via Mercier and De Smedt – during the last quarter of the nineteenth century to write and research as Catholics, whilst simultaneously preserving the scientific nature of their writings.⁴⁹⁸ Similarly, Elias legitimated the necessity to adhere to one’s own convictions – and by consequence national perspective – when he argued that “it is inherent to the nature of history that the historian, when reaching the stage of historical synthesis, marks his work by his own personality and convictions.”⁴⁹⁹ The consequence of this distinction between neutrality and impartiality, which was itself an indication of the continuation of the neo-Thomist framework into the national historiographies of Quebec and Flanders, was a nuanced interpretation of the concept of impartiality that, contrary to traditional portrayals of the notion, openly legitimated the political and philosophical standpoints of the historian.

The second consequence of the emphasis on the particular interest of a historical fact, and the necessity of a subjective individual to synthesize the different facts is that nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders deemed the possibility of an absolutely definitive history impossible. Because of the emphasis on the need for a subjective individual to synthesise objective facts, historians in Quebec and Flanders realized that history was a never-ending story, in which the interpretation of what

⁴⁹⁶ Lionel Groulx, *Vers l’émancipation*, pp.8.

⁴⁹⁷ Hendrik Elias, *De Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, pp.5.

⁴⁹⁸ Lionel Groulx, *Vers l’émancipation*, pp.8.

⁴⁹⁹ Hendrik Elias, *Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, pp. 3.

constituted history constantly transformed. Groulx made this clear when he argued that “in history, we do not believe in definitive works. The historian that knows his metier, knows to be modest. ‘Nobody can fully grasp history’ Godefroid Kurth said, that old master who had nonetheless claimed ‘to have grown old in front of the charters.’”⁵⁰⁰ Moreover, the idea that the subjective historian, himself a product of his historical circumstances, was crucial in the process of synthesis led to the argument that history as a discipline was to a certain degree cyclical, as each generation had to reinterpret the objective facts so as to address the changing historical circumstances. This was illustrated in Elias’ conceptualization of history, as he explained how

Synthesis is a search for truth, not in facts, but in proportions. Each new generation envisions history differently than its predecessor, because they understand life differently and give an alternate meaning to the different parts of human being and development. Moreover, in each generation each philosophy posits its own synthesis of history against those other convictions because they differ in opinion on what constitutes the origin of their own time.⁵⁰¹

By positing that not only every generation, but every different philosophy or conviction within one generation posits its own synthesis of history, Elias illustrates how the emphasis on the historical fact as possessing its own proper interest led to the realization that each generation and philosophy could use and transform the objective facts in their subjective synthesis, as long as it adhered to the scientific principles that constituted the objective facts as foundation for the synthesis. Consequently, this interpretation led to the belief that history could never be definitive, as each new generation would have to reinterpret the objective facts in a new historical context, leading to a new synthesis that would ultimately become obsolete itself as history would continue to progress. It is exactly in this conceptualization of history that the neo-Thomist emphasis on the symbiosis of subjectivity and objectivity is clearly illustrated, and shows how the neo-Thomist concepts were transformed and adapted to the two national historiographical frameworks, resulting in the belief that objective history was possible through the method of historical critique, but could never become finished, as history was essentially a subjective process and each generation had to reinterpret and synthesise the objective facts.

III.III.II. Different representation of scientific history in Quebec and Flanders

Up to this point, we have seen the similar adaptation of the neo-Thomist framework into the nationalist historiography of Quebec and Flanders, resulting in a similar conceptualization of what constitutes scientific history by nationalist historian in both Quebec and Flanders. The question now

⁵⁰⁰ See Section III.II.I.

⁵⁰¹ Hendrik Elias, *Het Nationaal Gevoel*, pp. 323.

remains is how historians represented the scientific aspect of their historical works. What will become clear is that while nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders, due to their adherence to the neo-Thomist framework, had a similar concept of what constituted scientific history, the practical realization and representation of this scientific nature differed. Using a paratextual analysis which focuses on the front matter and representation of the author, it will be argued that Flemish nationalist historians, as opposed to the French-Canadian historians, represented their historical works in adherence to the conventional scientific style of the early twentieth century. This, it will be argued, is because of the different academic and publishing context of Flanders and Quebec. Contrary to nationalist historians in Quebec – who had their own academic cadres following the 1867 British North America Act – Flemish historians had to convey their historical nationalist narrative in a Belgian academic context. Consequently, the issue for a scientific legitimate claim to the national past was more pressing in Flanders than in Quebec, as will be illustrated via the case of Van Roosbroeck and Elias. However, it is first imperative to specify the relevance and benefits of using paratextual elements as a comparative measure in nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders.

III.III.II.I. Paratextual elements in (nationalist) historiography

Paratextual elements are, in accordance with the historian Gerard Genette's definition, the elements that accompany a (written) text and as such make it present in the world.⁵⁰² As Genette explains, "the paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public."⁵⁰³ What is crucial to highlight in this definition, and what is of particular importance to the analysis of nationalist historiography, is the emphasis on the relation between a text (in this case the historical analysis) and the reader, the public. Two elements need to be further highlighted in accordance with this emphasis. First, this definition acknowledges the intrinsic public nature of historiography. A historical work, for it to be constituted as a historical work, needs to be a public document that is debated and discussed by other people, be it other historians or readers.⁵⁰⁴ Moreover, the public nature of a historical work ascribes a certain role to the publisher, and to the conventional stylistic practices of a specific context, as they are fundamental to convey the historical

⁵⁰² Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. trans. Jane Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 1-15; Also see Elise Garritzen, 'Paratexts and Footnotes in Historical Narrative: Henry Biaudet and Scholarly and Nationalistic Ambitions of Historical Research 1902–1915', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 37 (2012), pp. 407-29; Valerie Pellatt, *Text, Extratext, Metatext and Paratext in Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp. 1-8; Giovanni Ciotti, and Hang Lin, *Tracing Manuscripts in Time and Space through Paratexts* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. vii-xii

⁵⁰³ Genette, *Paratexts*, pp. 1.

⁵⁰⁴ In this sense, each historical work, as part of the general culture, has to be considered – in Geertzian fashion – as an "acted document", thus emphasising the plurality of actors and public nature of a historical work. See Clifford Geertz, 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture', in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz* ed. by Clifford Geertz (New York: Basic Books Publishers, 1973), pp. 3-30.

narrative as clearly as possible.⁵⁰⁵ The consequence of this notion is the second element. As a book has to be “offered” to its readers, this implies that the paratextual elements of a historical work are subject to contextual differences and change. Consequently, this makes it possible for a historical narrative or text to convey the same ideas or theories, but be presented or offered in a different style due to the different contexts in which the paratextual elements are used. In this sense, it is possible, as we will see later with the cases of the Quebec and Flemish national historians, to be influenced by the same historiographical principles and concepts, but present them in a different manner due to different contextual practices dictating the use of paratextual elements.

Having briefly outlined the benefits and relevance of the paratextual elements with regards to the comparison of the national historiographical practices of Quebec and Flanders, and how it can possibly explain a discrepancy between practice and theory in the two historiographies, the question remains what exactly constituted the paratextual elements of the historiographical practices of nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century. A crucial starting point is the title page (or front matter), as this is traditionally the first encounter a reader has with the historical work, and it sets the immediate tone and style for the entire historical work.⁵⁰⁶ In this sense, it is beneficial to start with two popular historical works of the nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders during this period, as they clearly encapsulate the paratextual conventions and practices: the first volume of the *History of Flanders* on the one hand, and the first edition of Groulx’s *Notre Maître le Passe* on the other hand (See Appendix 8). First, it is clear that there are a number of stylistic similarities between the two title pages. Both feature a clear concise title and put the author’s name prominently at the page. Moreover, both title pages have a similar display of the publishing house, as the Flemish publisher *Standaard Boekhandel*’s symbol is marked clearly, just as the *Action Francaise*’s symbol of Dollard des Ormeaux, which was the traditional figure used by the French-Canadian nationalist publisher, as he, according to the nationalists, encapsulated the French-Canadian nation.⁵⁰⁷ The main difference, and the first indication of a discrepancy in representation between historical works in Quebec and Flanders is the description and representation of the author. The Flemish case represented the historians based on their academic titles and positions, whereas the French-Canadian historical work put emphasis on Groulx’s Catholic title rather than his academic

⁵⁰⁵ See Elise Garritzen, 'Paratexts and Footnotes in Historical Narrative', pp. 407-29; Helen Smith, and Louise Wilson, *Renaissance Paratexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁵⁰⁶ Elise Garritzen, 'Paratexts and Footnotes in Historical Narrative', pp. 412.

⁵⁰⁷ For more on the historical figure Dollard, see John Dickinson, 'Dollard Des Ormeaux, Adam', in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History*, ed. by Gerald Hallowell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). On the commemoration of Dollard and its relevance to Groulx and nationalists, see Alan Gordon, *Making Public Pasts: The Contested Terrain of Montréal's Public Memories, 1891-1930* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), pp. 156-157.

position at the University of Montreal. It should be noted that this practice of referring to the Catholic rather than the academic title differed from publisher to publisher, as is clear for example in the work of Ivanhoe Caron's *La colonisation du Canada sous la domination française* (1916) which listed his academic titles next to his position as "missionary-coloniser", which can be considered as an indication of the interconnectedness of the academic and religious context in Quebec during this period (See Appendix 9). In addition, the practice of putting a quote at the title page, as is clear in the works of both Caron and Groulx, is another indication of a different practice in Quebec and Flanders. The quotes, to a certain extent, inform the reader on the content of the historical work, and, more importantly, what exactly should be learned from reading the book, as is clear for example in the second quote on Caron's title page which states that "a page from the history of Canada is a lesson of hope and Christian spirit" (See Appendix 9).

The omission of this practice in the Flemish case indicates a difference in the paratextual practices and conventions. This discrepancy between the representation of scientific history, with Flemish historians more inclined to highlight the scientific (paratextual) elements of their works compared to their French-Canadian counterparts, can be further illustrated in the representation of the scientific nature of the historians in the introduction to their work. Nationalist historians in Flanders, while legitimating the partisan point of view as a result of their adaptation of the neo-Thomist framework, stressed the scientific nature of their historical work so as to legitimate the Flemish nationalist perspective on history. This becomes apparent from the nationalist historians' treatment of the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne and his seminal work the *History of Belgium*. Flemish nationalist historians did not disguise their motive for discrediting the impact Pirenne's work had had on Belgian historiography, and consequently the legitimization of the Belgian nation.⁵⁰⁸ Elias for example explained how "Pirenne wanted to provide the new [Belgian] state a past that would be its legitimization as a nation. 1830 [Belgian Revolution] was no coincidence for him: it was the necessary consequence and the confirmation of a historical development that had took place in the Southern Netherlands since the Middle Ages and has formed both Flemings and Walloons into a Belgian nation."⁵⁰⁹ Pirenne, according to the Flemish nationalist historians, was the epitome of the traditional

⁵⁰⁸ See Geneviève Warland, 'Wars of Religion in the National Liberal Narratives at the Turn of the 20th Century. P.J. Blok, Karl Lamprecht, Ernest Lavisse and Henri Pirenne.', in *Nationalizing the Past. Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe*, ed. by Chris Lorenz and Stefan Berger (2010), pp. 107-27; Sarah Keymeulen, 'Henri Pirenne (1862-1935), a Belgian Historian and the Development of Social and Historical Sciences. Conclusion. Towards a New Intellectual Biography of Pirenne', *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis*, 41 (2011), pp. 575-81; Philippe Raxhon, 'History and Commemorations. The Pirenne Agenda', *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis*, 41 (2011), pp. 515-31; Jo Tollebeek, 'Pirenne and Fredericq Historiographical Ambitions around 1900', *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis*, 41 (2011), pp. 383-409.

⁵⁰⁹ Hendrik Elias, *De Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, pp. 7.

Belgian national historiography, and by disproving his historical claims these historians could legitimate their own historical perspective.⁵¹⁰ Consequently, Flemish nationalist historians emphasised the unscientific nature of Pirenne's claim and, by comparison, the scientific rigour and logic that was apparent from their own methodology and interpretation. Elias further elaborated on this point when he explained how "the realization of such a conceptualization [by Pirenne] was only possible by a strong synthetic interpretation of our past. Much of what we are used to find in our patriotic history has been removed by him. This was not only crucial for the sources, but the methodology as well."⁵¹¹

This argument that Elias and other Flemish historians made against Pirenne can be considered as a logical extension of their conceptualization of what constituted scientific history. The historians argued that Pirenne did not adhere to the objective historical facts that were crucial in the synthetic process of history, and as such did not produce scientific history, but only a literary narration of past events. This emphasis on Pirenne's literary skills is highlighted for example in Leo Delfos' analysis of the battle of Coutrai of 1302 and Pirenne's account of the battle and preceding events. The Flemish historian described the Belgian historian's analysis as a "fabric of bad decency", arguing that the account consisted of "grave mistakes, superficiality, omissions and a contortion of the facts from the sources."⁵¹² Consequently, the result of this portrayal was that Pirenne's work was repeatedly described as "unscientific superficiality" because it distorted the balance between objective historical facts and subjective synthesis, with the primacy of the latter over the former, resulting in an unscientific historical work.⁵¹³ This is clear in Delfos' explanation of what constituted synthesis in the historical science, admitting that

a general history [can't] divulge on particularities, as 'synthesis' is her practice. Yet if Pirenne summarizes this chapter on the war [in the duchy of Flanders between 1297-1300] and its psychological effects as 'The invasion had taken place quickly', how can one speak of any truth in this synthesis? Is this not rather an artificial ploy that, in a competent but inappropriate way, magically erases facts which would be crucial when assessing the motives of the revolt [of 1302]?⁵¹⁴

⁵¹⁰ See Marnix Beyen, *Oorlog En Verleden*, pp. 395-404.

⁵¹¹ Hendrik Elias, *De Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, pp. 8.

⁵¹² Leo Delfos, 'Conscience's Leeuw Van Vlaanderen En De Historische Werkelijkheid', in *Verkenningen Door Onze Geschiedenis*, ed. by Leo Delfos (Bruges: Uitgave Wiek, 1944), pp. 35

⁵¹³ The term "onwetenschappelijke oppervlakkigheid" is three times on three separate pages, all related to Pirenne's analysis of the historical period and events, see Delfos, 'Conscience's Leeuw Van Vlaanderen', pp. 38-40.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 38.

Delfos's characterization of Pirenne's work as unscientific and his methodology limited to synthesis has two consequences. On the one hand, it discards the historical claims made by Pirenne – and by consequence other Belgian historians – as they are not based on the historical facts, but are the result of a process of synthesis that puts no emphasis on the objective, analytical side, characterized by the historical critique. In this sense, rejecting Pirenne's historical work constituted the general rejection of the Belgian historiographical practice, and the claims it made regarding the existence of a Belgian nation.⁵¹⁵ This leads, on the other hand, to the main issue for Flemish nationalist historians, and their motive to scientifically disprove Pirenne's historical claims. By putting emphasis on the scientific nature of their own historical works, in combination with the characterization of Pirenne and Belgian historiography as limited to synthesis, Flemish nationalist historians wanted to lay claim on the historical facts, and legitimate their own historical interpretation as the only objective and historically correct narrative. Representing their work in a scientific manner was thus not only in accordance with the conventional practice and demands of the historical discipline of that time, it was necessary to legitimate their own historical interpretation, and discredit the existing Belgian historiographical practice. Elias, in an analysis of Flemish historiography at the start of the interwar period, highlighted this point of maintaining their scientific stature even when discrediting the Belgian historians when he explained that “a historical work that wants to be sound – and if the [possibly upcoming] *History of Flanders* can't be this, we should not pursue it – has to discard any a priori viewpoint. So that means no systematic demolition of Pirenne: that would be too unscientific.”⁵¹⁶ Elias' comment on the unscientific nature of systematically rejecting Pirenne highlights the emphasis Flemish nationalist historians put on representing their historical works in a scientific manner so as to legitimately disclaim the Belgian historiography, and not run the risk of portraying their work as too biased or political.

This endeavour of rejecting Pirenne's *History of Belgium* and replace it with a Flemish interpretation was accomplished under the direction of Rob van Roosbroeck with the publication of the six volumes of the *History of Flanders*.⁵¹⁷ This multivolume work can be considered as the epitome of Elias' remark. This is first of all clear in the presentation of the work by Van Roosbroeck himself. Van Roosbroeck illustrates the practice of putting emphasis on the scientific nature of the historical work so as to reduce the risk of becoming too political when he explained how

⁵¹⁵ To a certain extent, this was a motive shared by the Dutch historians in the Great-Netherlandish movement, most particularly Pieter Geyl, see Lode Wils, 'Geyl En Pirenne', *Wetenschappelijke Tijdingen*, 60 (2001), 167-75.

⁵¹⁶ Hendrik Elias, 'De Geschiedenis Van Vlaanderen', *Vlaanderen*, 10-1-1922.

⁵¹⁷ Armand Van Nimmen, *Rob Van Roosbroeck En Tijdgenoten: Het Verdriet Van Vlaanderen* (Ghent: Academia Press, 2014), pp. 87-95.

To write a history of Flanders, a watchful eye is necessary to separate history from politics. Where politics can benefit from the results of history, and actually *should*, history can't ground itself in a political ideology. Describing historical events in Flanders thus requires a very objective methodology, that is only concerned with the result of the scientific research and not with the political opportunities of certain goals.⁵¹⁸

Despite this emphasis on the objective scientific nature of the historical work, Van Roosbroeck's main issue was to provide an explicitly Flemish historical interpretation that could be considered as an alternative to the traditional Belgian historiography and practice.⁵¹⁹ He explained how he "wants to give the Flemish people a history of its regions, which are Flemish in essence and development, and have been included in the Belgian state. The history of the "existing" Flanders."⁵²⁰

In this sense, the *History of Flanders* positions itself clearly in the nationalist historiographical practice, as it on the one hand stresses the importance of objective historical data, whilst on the other hand emphasises its own subjective interpretation. The difference with the French-Canadian counterpart is the emphasis on the paratextual elements that stressed the scientific nature of the historical work which is used to limit the critique of political bias whilst simultaneously undermining the legitimacy of the traditional Belgian historiography, thereby promoting their own historical (and political) interpretation. Consequently, the *History of Flanders* was accepted by the Belgian historiography as a legitimate historical work. The Belgian historian Charles Terlinden for example concluded that "it can be said satisfactorily that the first two volumes of the *History of Flanders* wholeheartedly fulfil the expectations of a large audience, and the professional can benefit more than once from reading these stately and neat volumes."⁵²¹ What the analysis of the paratextual elements of the French-Canadian and Flemish nationalist historians has illustrated is that while they conceptualize scientific history in a similar manner, the representation of the scientific aspects in their historical works differ. The question then remains as to what can help explain why Flemish nationalist historians put more emphasis on the representation of the scientific paratextual elements than their French-Canadian counterparts.

III.III.II.II. Academic context in Quebec and Flanders

As explained in the previous section, paratextual elements constitute a number of different interactions between different actors, most notably the writer (i.e. historian) and the reader.

⁵¹⁸ Rob Van Roosbroeck, *Geschiedenis Van Vlaanderen*, pp. 8.

⁵¹⁹ Marnix Beyen, *Oorlog En Verleden*, pp. 396-398.

⁵²⁰ Rob Van Roosbroeck, *Geschiedenis Van Vlaanderen*, pp. 8

⁵²¹ Charles Terlinden, 'Geschiedenis Van Vlaanderen Onder Leiding Van Van Roosbroeck (Prof. Dr. R.), Deel I En li.', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 21 (1942), pp. 282.

Moreover, due to the intrinsic public nature of historical works, a certain role and influence can be ascribed to the publisher and the publishing house.⁵²² However, if we take a closer look at the context of publishing and regional publishing houses in particular, it becomes apparent that both regions experienced a similar development during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, and, as such, is thus limited to the explanation for the difference in paratextual usage.⁵²³ What is crucial to point out is that in both regions the publishing sector had expanded during this period, resulting in cheaper material and processes to publish and distribute historical works.⁵²⁴ Consequently, this led to an increase in both publishing houses and full-time professional publishers, which benefitted the regional markets in Quebec and Flanders, and provided nationalist historians with an increased opportunity to publish their works.⁵²⁵ Moreover, due to the expansion of publishers during this period, it became possible for nationalists in both Quebec and Flanders to set up their own publishing houses, as is clear for example in Quebec with the foundation of the *Action française* bookstore, which published a number of Lionel Groulx's lectures and works, or the *Standaard Boekhandel* in Flanders, which was responsible for the publication of Van Roosbroeck's *History of Flanders* (see Appendices 8 and 9). However, despite this similar process in Quebec and Flanders during this period, the representation of the scientific nature of the historical works using specific paratextual elements differed, and as such, can't be considered a viable explanation for the difference in practice between nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders.

A crucial element to explain the difference between the representation of the historical works in Quebec and Flanders can be found in the differing academic context. In this sense, the 1867 British North America Act, and the different political issues regarding education in Quebec and Flanders during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century prove to be an instrumental starting point. First of all, it is important to highlight the relevance of the British North America Act of 1867 (Constitution Act), and the consequences it has had for the development of the academic context in Quebec, as compared to Flanders and the Belgian constitution of 1831.⁵²⁶ Both constitutions granted the freedom of education, thus allowing different denominations to set up their own school networks.

⁵²² See footnotes 502-504.

⁵²³ For a good overview in both cases, see Jacques Michon, *Histoire Du L'édition Littéraire Au Québec Au Xxe Siècle, Volume 1: La Naissance De L'éditeur, 1900-1939* (Montreal: Fides, 1999); Ludo Simons, *Geschiedenis Van De Uitgeverij in Vlaanderen. II: De Twintigste Eeuw* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1987).

⁵²⁴ Yvan Lamonde, Patricia Lockhart Fleming, and Fiona Black, *History of the Book in Canada. Volume II: 1840-1918* (Toronto University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 75-118.

⁵²⁵ Ludo Simons, *Geschiedenis Van De Uitgeverij*, pp. 57-147.

⁵²⁶ The British North America Act can be found at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/30-31/3/contents>. For more on the debates prior to the British North America Act, see Janet Ajzenstat, Ian Gentles, Paul Romney, and William Gairdner, *Canada's Founding Debates* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

The Belgian constitution of 1831 explicitly stated that “education is free” and that “every prohibitive measure is forbidden.”⁵²⁷ The result of this was, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the foundation of two distinct school networks in Belgium during the nineteenth century, ultimately leading to the “School War” of the late 1870s and early 1880s.⁵²⁸ The main difference with the British North America Act, and the first indication of what can explain the difference in representation between the two nationalist historiographies, is that Section 93 of the Constitution Act specified that “in and for each Province the Legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Education,” thus granting the provinces (including Quebec) the power to develop and construct their own educational and academic spaces.⁵²⁹ What this meant was that Quebec, unlike Flanders, had the possibility to found institutions that were essentially regional, and only abide with the provincial laws.⁵³⁰ However, similar to Flanders and Belgium, denominational differences could still exist in Quebec due to the emphasis on the freedom of education, as is clear for example in the existence of Protestant education (both in English and French) in the province of Quebec during this period.⁵³¹ The main element however was that education was limited to the province of Quebec, and universities, and the academic context in general, were thus restricted to the province, although supra-provincial institutions such as the Société Royale du Canada demand a nuance to this image, and show that the academic and educational context in Quebec should not be considered as completely isolated from the national level.⁵³²

The main point however – i.e. that Quebec, contrary to Flanders, had an academic and educational context that was specifically tailored to the province – can be further illustrated when comparing the educational issues and debates that occurred in the two regions during this period. If we compare the Ontario and Manitoba School Questions, which revolved around a limitation of the French language in primary schools in the provinces of Ontario and Manitoba, with the Flemish demands for the use of Dutch in secondary schools, and the plea for the Dutchification of the

⁵²⁷ 'De Belgische Grondwet Van 7 Februari 1831', <http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_bel003belg01_01/_bel003belg01_01_0002.php>.

⁵²⁸ Els Witte, Alain Meynen, and Dirk Luyten, *Politieke Geschiedenis Van België*, pp. 95-98.

⁵²⁹ 'British North America Act 1867, Section 93', <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/30-31/3/section/93>>.

⁵³⁰ As long as they did not infringe upon federal laws.

⁵³¹ This is clear in the existence of both Protestant (McGill) and Catholic (Laval) Universities in Quebec during this period. See Mary Elizabeth Devine, and Carol Summerfield, *International Dictionary of University Histories* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 241-245; Jean Hamelin, *Histoire De L'université Laval: Les Péripéties D'une Idée* (Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1995); Richard Loughheed, 'Clashes in Worldview: French Protestants and Roman Catholics in the 19th Century', in *French-Speaking Protestants in Canada: Historical Essays*, ed. by Jason Zuidema (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 99-118.

⁵³² Pierre Savard, 'Gustave Lanctot Et La Société Royale Du Canada', *les Cahiers des Dix*, 48 (1993), pp. 225-54.

University of Ghent, we can assess two elements that validate this point.⁵³³ First, it is beneficial to highlight that the issues surrounding language and education in French Canada did not occur in the province of Quebec, but revolved around the French-speaking minorities in the provinces of Manitoba and Ontario.⁵³⁴ It should be noted however that the early critiques on the educational reforms were formulated on the basis of a French-Canadian identity that was not limited to Quebec, but was envisioned as constituting all French-Canadians, no matter the province in which they lived.⁵³⁵ The archbishop of Montreal, Paul Bruchési, for example encapsulated this element by stressing that “French has some undeniable rights in this land of Canada,” illustrating that it is not limited to the province of Quebec because, as he explained, French is the “language of our cradle and we see it as the guardian and protector of our beliefs.”⁵³⁶ While this is an important nuance to keep in mind, the difference with Flanders is that it was possible for French-Canadians in Quebec to comment on the state of the French language in other provinces, whilst maintaining control, through the Constitution Act, on the educational policies in the province of Quebec. In Flanders, jurisdiction over educational policies were maintained by the unitary Belgian state. Consequently, the distinction that had taken place in Canada between the provinces did not take place in Belgium, and as such, it was not possible in Flanders to construct and develop an educational and academic context that was inextricably linked to the region, and not the national level. This becomes clear when we consider the difference in emphasis nationalists put on what level of the education needed to be reformed, and required the most mobilization of the nationalist movement.

For Flemish nationalists, the key issue revolved around the University of Ghent, and there are two elements that, when compared to Quebec, indicate that Flemish nationalists, and by consequence historians, did not occupy their own academic space, but were part of the larger Belgian academic context. First, there is the fact that the educational issue in Flanders revolved around the level of higher education, and not, as in French Canada, the primary schools. In addition, it is beneficial to note that Flemish nationalists ascribed a similar role to the Flemish language as French-Canadians did with regards to French as basis of their culture and beliefs. The Flemish nationalist Lodewijk de Raet for example described the negative effects of French language policies in Flanders, explaining how “the ‘Francization’ works in Flanders like a scorching sun: it dries out the sources and withers the soil: it

⁵³³ Maria De Waele, 'De Strijd Om De Citadel', pp. 153-93; the prominence of Ghent is highlighted in section H.1.

⁵³⁴ See Michel Bock, 'Les Franco-Ontariens Et Le « Réveil » De La Nation', pp. 157-77.

⁵³⁵ This can be traced back to the interpretation of French-Canadian nationalism during this period, see James Kennedy, *Liberal Nationalisms*, pp. 258-263.

⁵³⁶ John Zucchi, *View from Rome: Archbishop Stagni's 1915 Reports on the Ontario Bilingual Schools Question* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), pp. 66.

kills all originality.”⁵³⁷ However, what is important to stress is the emphasis Flemish nationalist put on the lack of an explicitly Flemish university, even though there were universities (including Ghent and Leuven) in the region of Flanders. Using the same argument as Bruchési, De Raet argued that “the Flemings have a right for a complete higher education in their own language”, and that “the Flemish people do not settle for an inferior or incomplete college or department. It therefore reclaims the university that should have always been Flemish: the University of Ghent!”⁵³⁸ De Raet’s arguments for a Flemish-speaking university in Ghent illustrate that the academic context in Flanders, contrary to Quebec, can’t be considered as a regional entity, but has to be perceived as embedded in the larger Belgian academic context. This becomes particularly clear when assessing the role and status of the Flemish language in the Belgian academic context during this period, highlighting a key aspect in understanding the difference in scientific representation by historians in Quebec and Flanders.

One of the main issues influencing the question of the Flemish/Dutch language in the Belgian academic context was whether Flemish could be considered as a scientific language. As seen in the previous chapter, archbishop Mercier argued that “whoever understands the role of a university which from a first point of view advances science and culture, can’t reasonably pretend that French and Flemish should be considered as equals in the university education.”⁵³⁹ De Raet disagreed with this perception of the role and status of the Flemish language compared to French, and explained how “the use of a world language is not the deciding factor, and that the national [Flemish] language is preferable because she is the most natural and easiest method to develop the mind.”⁵⁴⁰ This debate on the scientific applicability of the Flemish language is a crucial element to keep in mind, as it helps to explain why Flemish nationalist historians presented their work as scientific via the paratextual elements, as compared to the limited use by the French-Canadian historians. The debate on the scientific applicability of the regional language was non-existent in Quebec as French, as is clear by the debates in Flanders, was perceived as having an international and scientific status. Groulx for example confirmed this perception of the French language when, in an overview of French literature in the seventeenth century, he stated how “none is more human, indeed, out of all the literatures in the world, none has contributed more ideas of a universal nature [than the French language].”⁵⁴¹ The combination of the lack of explicitly Flemish universities with the perceived inferior and unscientific status of the Flemish language can help to explain the difference between nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders, and why Flemish historians were more inclined to stress the scientific nature of

⁵³⁷ Lodewijk De Raet, 'Waarom Gent?', pp. 289.

⁵³⁸ Ibid., pp. 313-314.

⁵³⁹ Karel Van Isacker, *Herderlijke Brieven*, pp. 81

⁵⁴⁰ Lodewijk De Raet, 'Waarom Gent?', pp. 313.

⁵⁴¹ Lionel Groulx, *Dix Ans D'action Française* (Montreal: Bibliothèque de l'Action française 1926), pp. 13

their historical works, as it was not only a requirement to validate the historical legitimacy of their works in a non-Flemish academic context, but was also necessary to illustrate the scientific applicability of the Flemish/Dutch language.

One final element, the Belgian political context has to be taken into account, as it provides a crucial illustration for the difference between the representation of scientific history in Flanders and Quebec during this period, and the difference in the academic context that can be seen as a major influence for this. As seen in the Historiography chapter, the First World War, and the collaboration of a section of the Flemish national movement, had brought tensions to the Belgian political context of the interwar period, which subsequently affected the Belgian historiographical and academic context as well. The publication of the *Bewijsstukken voor de geschiedenis van den oorlog in België: Het Archief van den Raad van Vlaanderen* [Documents for the history of the war in Belgium: the Archive of the Council of Flanders] under the direction of Belgian historian Jacques Pirenne, the son of the aforementioned Henri Pirenne, can be seen in this light. The work wanted to contribute to the historical narrative on Flemish nationalism, and prove its illegitimacy due to its German origins during the war, thus constituting it as artificial compared to other national movements in Europe. This was made apparent from the introduction of the work, when Pirenne stated that “foreign papers, scientific journals often analyse Flemish nationalism, and it is regularly portrayed as being of the same calibre as the nationalist urge in Czechoslovakia, Ireland or Poland. [...] The attempt to form a State (or Kingdom) of Flanders, separate from Belgium, started during the war, with the collaboration.”⁵⁴² Consequently, explicit proponents of Flemish nationalism were considered as hostile to the Belgian state and historiography, and were, to a certain degree, barred from the Belgian academic positions. This can be further illustrated by comparing the historical careers of Elias and Groulx, and their success and failure in their respective academic contexts. Elias graduated in 1921 with the highest distinction, and had a close relation with a number of Flemish academics at the university of Leuven, as was clear by the grant he received from the Belgian state through his connection with the Flemish linguist Lodewijk Scharpé.⁵⁴³ However, when Van der Essen and other Flemish academics proposed Elias for the Chair in Modern History at the Catholic University of Leuven, his application was ultimately refused due to Elias’s political standpoints, which the provost Ladeuze had asked Elias to articulate.⁵⁴⁴ The difference with Groulx is stark, as the French-Canadian historian had been appointed to the chair of

⁵⁴² Ligue nationale pour l'unité belge, *Het Archief Van Den Raad Van Vlaanderen* (Brussels: Dewarichet, 1929), pp. 1.

⁵⁴³ Joris Dedeurwaerder, 'Een Mens Van Vlees En Bloed...?', pp.250

⁵⁴⁴ Lode Wils, 'Elias of Het Gevecht Met De Democratie', pp. 29; Lode Wils, 'Elias of Het Gevecht Met De Geschiedenis', pp. 193-209.

Canadian history at the University of Montreal by Paul Bruchési in 1915, without a formal application procedure, nor any enquiries into his political viewpoints.⁵⁴⁵ What this shows is that due to the existence of a regional academic context in Quebec, the political tensions were less apparent, and as such, nationalist historians such as Groulx did not experience as fierce an opposition to their historical and academic claims. This does not mean however that there was an absolute uniformity as was clear for example in the divergence between the historians Arthur Maheux and Lionel Groulx during the Second World War on the nature of nationalism, or Groulx's strenuous relation with the historian and archivist Gustave Lanctot.⁵⁴⁶

There should be one more nuanced addition to his comparison, as it helps to frame the overall academic context of the two regions. It should be noted that these two examples constitute the extreme ends of the academic spectrum, and that the fierce dichotomy between Flemish and Belgian nationalists in the academic context was only apparent from this specific group.⁵⁴⁷ Moreover, the fact that Elias had been able to obtain a research grant from the Belgian state, and managed to spend a year at the *Belgian Historical Institute* in Rome indicates that there was a grey area of co-operation and mutual influence in the Belgian academic context. However, notwithstanding this nuanced element, the two cases of Groulx and Elias, in addition to the previous elements, illustrate how there was a differing academic context that helps to explain why Flemish nationalist historians used their specific paratextual elements to emphasise the scientific nature of their historical works. The comparison between Elias and Groulx should thus be seen as an indication of the larger trend that has been pointed out in this section, and which helps to explain the difference in representation of scientific history by nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders.

III.IV. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have made two general arguments regarding the influence of neo-Thomism on the constitution of scientific history in the nationalist historiographies of Quebec and Flanders. First, it has been argued that the neo-Thomist emphasis on the symbiosis of the subjective and objective in the particular sciences led to a unique interpretation of what constituted scientific history. Contrary to traditional portrayals, nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders deemed their historical works as scientific, because it was based on the neo-Thomist principles, thereby legitimating a subjective interpretation of the objective historical facts, which were conceptualized in such a manner that it

⁵⁴⁵ Lionel Groulx, *Mes Memoires*, pp. 249-250

⁵⁴⁶ See Ronald Rudin, *Making History*, pp. 51-52; Pierre Savard, 'Gustave Lanctot Et La Société Royale', pp. 225-54.

⁵⁴⁷ This is clear by the fact that Flemish historians such as Ganshof and Van Werveke did obtain positions, and were simultaneously able to contribute to both Flemish and Belgian historical works. See Marnix Beyen, *Oorlog En Verleden*, pp. 396-398.

necessitated a subjective, synthetic approach. Moreover, it was argued that the traditional portrayal by neo-Thomists of the historical fact as constituting its proper interest was transformed into the two nationalist historiographies, and, as such, provided the rationale and framework for the nationalist historians to legitimate their national interpretations as proper scientific history. Secondly, it has been argued that although the conceptualization of what constitutes scientific history was similar in Quebec and Flanders, the representation of scientific history via paratextual elements differed in both cases. We have highlighted how Flemish nationalist historians were more inclined to emphasise the scientific nature of their historical works to legitimate the rejection of the traditional Belgian historiography, and argued that the different academic contexts – with the Flemish context embedded in the larger Belgian academic sphere – could be considered as one of the main reasons for the different practices in Flanders and Quebec. What this chapter has thus argued is that different historiographies could be influenced by a similar tradition, but could be altered by different academic contexts. In this sense, the notion of scientific history in both cases highlights the complex interplay between different factors that contribute to the practical realization of the theoretical concepts that can be attributed to the neo-Thomist framework. In the final chapter, this interplay and difference between the two cases will once again be highlighted, as it will analyse the final essential element of the neo-Thomist framework: the concept of teleology and human freedom in history.

Chapter IV. Providence and Teleology in nationalist historiography

This chapter focuses on the third and final tenet of the neo-Thomist framework that played an influential role in the nationalist historiographies of Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century: the concept of teleology. First, it will be argued that the neo-Thomist concept of teleology can be considered as an extension of the older and more general debates that had existed in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. By focusing on the origins of the concept in the eighteenth century, it will be illustrated how the modern concept of teleology had the notions of ambiguity and plurality at its core. Moreover, it will be argued that the adaptation of the concept of teleology in the neo-Thomist framework led to a limited role of Providence in the explanation of human history, and an increased prominence of human freedom and will as explanations for progress and teleology in history.

This increased emphasis on ambiguity and human freedom in the concept of teleology will be further explored in the nationalist historiographies of Flanders and Quebec, leading to two main arguments. First, it will be argued that the notion of ambiguity was more prominent in nationalist historiographies in Quebec and Flanders than has traditionally been assumed. Using the concept of coincidence in Flemish nationalist historiography and the notion of Providence in Quebec, the emphasis nationalist historians put on this ambiguous element will highlight the adaptation of the neo-Thomist notion of teleology into the two different cases. Secondly, this chapter will analyse how the teleological conceptualization of history affected the political aspirations and motives of the nationalist historians during the first half of the twentieth century. It will be argued that due to their geopolitical and institutional difference, Flemish nationalist historians were more inclined to envision their own period as a catalyst, and ultimately providing the legitimation for collaboration with the German occupier during the Second World War. Using the case of Hendrik Elias in particular, it will become clear that the nationalist teleological perspective on history can provide a new insight into

the complex interplay between history and politics in Flemish nationalist historiography during the first half of the twentieth century.⁵⁴⁸

IV.I. Teleology: origins and neo-Thomist adaptation

IV.I.I. Origins of the concept teleology

In Chapter II we have assessed the principles that underlined neo-Thomist chemistry according to Nys. The chemist had argued how there were “three fundamental propositions”:

1. Simple bodies and chemical compounds are beings endowed with *substantial unity*, specifically *distinct* from one another, and naturally *extended*.
2. These beings possess *active and passive powers* which belong to them in virtue of their substantial essence and are indissolubly bound up with it
3. They have an *inherent tendency* to realize by the exercise of their native energies certain special ends.⁵⁴⁹

The brief characterization Nys provides for the final proposition is a good starting point to address the concept of teleology, and the role it plays in both the neo-Thomist and nationalist framework. Two elements are apparent from Nys’s description which need further explanation, and give a general outline of the concept of teleology. First, there is the notion that each substance, in addition to being comprised of an essence and existence, has an “inherent tendency”, which can be seen in relation to the neo-Thomist emphasis on the symbiosis of essence and existence, as a being has a will to exist and thus evolve and progress to obtain this real existence.⁵⁵⁰ Secondly, there is the notion that this progress is not random: each being or substance has a specific goal that is inherent to its essence.

What is important to highlight with regard to these two elements is that the neo-Thomist concept of teleology can be considered as a continuation of the original conceptualization of teleology in the 1700s, and, as such, retained the same characteristics. The concept had first been coined by the German philosopher Christian Wolff in his *Philosophia rationalis sive Logica* in relation to natural philosophy, specifying that the notion entailed “explaining the end of things.”⁵⁵¹ Following the genesis of the concept, philosophers and scientists in the 1700s would further debate the meaning and definition of the notion.⁵⁵² Two elements surrounding these debates need to be further explained, as they help to frame the neo-Thomist conceptualization of teleology, and how it relates to the

⁵⁴⁸ Part of this argument has been re-used in an article. See Kasper Swerts, “A Flemish Nozdormu?”

⁵⁴⁹ Nys, 'The Scholastic Theory: Historical Sketch', pp. 73.

⁵⁵⁰ This emphasis on teleology can be related back to Aquinas and Aristotle’s philosophies, see C.F.J. Martin, 'Aristotle and Aquinas on the Teleology of Parts and Wholes', *Tópicos*, 27 (2004), pp. 61-72.

⁵⁵¹ Christian Wolff, *Philosophia Rationalis Sive Logica* (s.l.: 1735), pp. 25.

⁵⁵² See John Reiss, 'Materialism, Teleology, and Evolution in the Enlightenment', in *Not by Design: Retiring Darwin's Watchmaker*, ed. by John Reiss (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), pp. 57-84.

nationalist historiographies. First, it should be noted that the concept of teleology was conceived in a pluralist manner, meaning that even though a being could have an internal tendency to develop towards certain goals, it was not limited to only one possibility. In this sense, the existence of a being was defined, as Wolff explains, “by the fulfilment of possibility”, thereby making the subsequent distinction between an existing entity – an “ens actuale” – and an entity that has the possibility to become real – an “ens potentiale.”⁵⁵³ How exactly this potential being would exist was thus not predetermined, although there were characteristics in the being itself that would propel it towards a certain goal. In this sense, neo-Thomists adhered to the same principles and distinctions these eighteenth-century philosophers made with regards to teleology and the notion of possibility. Nys for example illustrates this connection when he stated that “a thing cannot be something actually except it first be so potentially, that a subject cannot receive a determination except it be fitted by its nature to be so determined, is a truth of Metaphysics.”⁵⁵⁴ Teleology in this sense is thus connected to the notion of the fulfilment of possibility, and consequently, an ambiguous element in the realization of the potentiality of a being, as there are multiple possibilities as to how an essence, with its defining characteristics, can develop in reality.⁵⁵⁵

This leads to the second element that needs further explanation, and that can help to frame the teleological implications of Flemish and French-Canadian nationalist historiographies. The ambiguity that is apparent from the realization that an “ens potentiale” entails different possibilities and outcomes was particularly present with regards to the dialectic between predetermination and human freedom or will. Moreover, one of the most important notions that needs to be addressed with regards to the neo-Thomist concept of teleology is its relation to the question of causality, and the question on the role of God or Providence in human history. One of the main elements that surrounded the early debates on the notion of teleology was its connection to the question on the existence of God, and the relation between Providence and the natural world.⁵⁵⁶ Generally, the argument was made by these philosophers and scientists that the inherent tendency that was

⁵⁵³ “Hinc Existentium definitio per complementum possibilitatis,” Christian Wolff, *Philosophia*, pp. 143; Reiss, 'Materialism, Teleology, and Evolution in the Enlightenment', pp. 75-76.

⁵⁵⁴ D. Nys, 'The Scholastic Theory: Historical Sketch', pp. 94.

⁵⁵⁵ See for example Mariusz Tabaczek, 'Thomistic Response to the Theory of Evolution: Aquinas on Natural Selection and the Perfection of the Universe', *Theology and Science*, 13 (2015), pp. 325-44; Ernst von Glaserfeld, 'Teleology and the Concepts of Causation', *Philosophica*, 46 (1990), pp. 17-43.

⁵⁵⁶ Trüper, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction: Teleology and History. Nineteenth-Century Fortunes of an Enlightenment Project', in *Historical Teleologies in the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 7-13; Peter Wagner, 'Autonomy in History: Teleology in Nineteenth-Century European Social and Political Thought', in *Historical Teleologies in the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 323-24; Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 183-226.

apparent in each being was not generated randomly, but had been purposefully placed by a Creator. Consequently, this led to the belief that each existence in the natural world was unique, and ultimately placed there by design.⁵⁵⁷ It should be noted that this concept had existed prior to the 1700s, and had already been discussed in traditional Scholastic theory.⁵⁵⁸ The French Scholastic theologian Paul Lombard for example had written in the second volume of the seminal *Sentences* that “as man is made for the sake of God, namely, that he may serve him, so is the world made for the sake of man, that it may serve him.”⁵⁵⁹ There are however two elements that need to be stressed to highlight the importance of the 1700s for the development and influence of the teleological concept on the nationalist historiographies in Quebec and Flanders. The first is the conceptualization of the relation between human and nature that was prevalent in the 1700s. One of the key aspects of the debates on teleology, and the Enlightenment in general, was the subsuming of the natural world into an anthropocentric conceptualization, in which the world was guided by intelligible laws.⁵⁶⁰ Consequently, this meant that human freedom and will were also subject to certain principles or guiding laws, even if they were almost impossible to discern. Kant expressed this notion in relation to human history clearly in his *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View* (1784), in which he stated that

Whatever concept one may hold, from a metaphysical point of view, concerning the freedom of the will, certainly its appearances, which are human actions, like every other natural event are determined by universal laws. However obscure their causes, history, which is concerned with narrating these appearances, permits us to hope that if we attend to the play of freedom of the human will in the large, we may be able to discern a regular movement in it, and that what seems complex and chaotic in the single individual may be seen from the standpoint of the human race as a whole to be a steady and progressive though slow evolution of its original endowment.⁵⁶¹

Out of Kant’s characterization we can assess a second element that is crucial to highlight, and that will be of importance when analysing the concept of teleology in the nationalist historiographies of Quebec and Flanders. Kant’s characterization of history is inherently anthropocentric, meaning that the essence of history is guided by human individuals and their will, which, although almost impossible

⁵⁵⁷ Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, pp. 183-207.

⁵⁵⁸ See David Carr, 'Historical Teleology: The Grand Illusion', *History and Theory*, 56 (2017), 307-17;

⁵⁵⁹ Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, pp. 65

⁵⁶⁰ John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke. An Historical Account of the Argument of the 'Two Treatises of Government'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 96-119; Trüper, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction: Teleology and History', pp. 7-13.

⁵⁶¹ Immanuel Kant, *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View*, (<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/kant/universal-history.htm>); Louis Dupré, 'Kant's Theory of History and Progress', *The Review of Metaphysics*, 51 (1998), pp. 813-28.

to discern, are subject to intelligible laws. What this meant was that the role of Providence in this conceptualization of history was limited, as the natural world is occupied by humans who follow certain intrinsic laws, and act accordingly. In this sense, this concept of history can be seen in light of the broader debates spanning the late seventeenth and eighteenth century on the deistic principle, which ascribed a limited agency to Providence in human history, and emphasised the natural and human traits which were, as seen in Kant's description, subject to universal laws concerning the entirety of humanity.⁵⁶² Moreover, what is important to point out is that the teleological progress of human history was guided by individual historical actors, defined by their own freedom and will, thus maintaining a certain degree of historicity in the overall teleological process whilst simultaneously claiming that the progress of humanity was based on certain intelligible universal laws. Whether these laws could ultimately be understood was obfuscated by Kant himself, pointing out that it “*may become possible*”, thereby adhering to the ambiguous principle that was essential to the early notion of teleology in the 1700s.⁵⁶³

IV.I.II. Two admonitions regarding Aquinas and the neo-Thomist concept of teleology

There are however two admonitions that have to be explained when it comes to the relation between the 1700s and neo-Thomism, and the way the teleological concept was conceptualized in the second half of the nineteenth century. First, it should be noted that neo-Thomism was conceived as a counterweight to neo-Kantian and positivist philosophies of the late nineteenth century, and, as such, denounced some of the extreme teleological principles that were set out by these systems.⁵⁶⁴ Mercier for example asked if “there [is] anything more tyrannical than the two fundamental dogmas of Positivism, namely one unique mode of knowledge and the doctrine of evolution?”⁵⁶⁵ Particularly the latter element of Mercier's critique, the “doctrine of evolution”, shows how neo-Thomists, like the original conceptualization of the 1700s, put emphasis on the plurality of possibilities in teleology. Mercier decried the positivist evolutionary concept, wondering “with what right do they want to impose on us, without any experimental proof, the blind belief in one ‘law of universal evolution’?”⁵⁶⁶ The rejection of this law as a universal explanation, combined with the element that there could only be one possible law of evolution shows how Mercier and other neo-Thomists ascribed a certain ambiguity, and notion of multiple possibilities in their explanation of the universe and evolution. It is

⁵⁶² See John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke*, pp. 96-119; Hein Van den Berg, 'The Wolffian Roots of Kant's Teleology', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, 44 (2013), pp. 724-34.

⁵⁶³ Trüper, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction: Teleology and History', pp. 7-13

⁵⁶⁴ For more on positivism in Belgium, see for example Kaat Wils, 'De Omweg Van De Wetenschap. Het Positivisme En De Belgische En Nederlandse Intellectuele Cultuur, 1845-1914.', *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis*, 31 (2001), pp. 296-302.

⁵⁶⁵ Désiré Mercier, 'La Philosophie Néo-Scolastique', pp. 12

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

clear that this rejection of positivist systems, and thus a singular possibility, was based on the argument that a rejection of metaphysics, which according to neo-Thomists, positivists argued for, led to a diminished role of God and the sciences in general. Théophile Desdouits for example, who would participate in the fourth International Scientific Congress of Catholics in Fribourg in 1897, had written in his *The Philosophy of Kant according to the Three Critiques* [1876] how “even if the critiques of Kant haven’t been able to discard the certitude [of metaphysics], the critiques of the modern sceptics and positivists will never be able to do this. Metaphysics is, according to the religious beliefs, the most noble necessity of human intelligence.”⁵⁶⁷

The problem of the positivistic teleology was, according to these Catholic scientists, that it had diminished the plethora of possibilities into one intelligible law, thus rendering the role of God and Providence non-existent in the progress of the natural world and humanity. For Catholics, and neo-Thomists in particular, the determinism of the natural world which was intelligible due to the progress of the exact sciences, was intrinsically insufficient, and required the recognition that a larger force – Providence – had the freedom and will to choose one particular universe out of a plethora of possibilities, thus acknowledging a certain ambiguity in the determinism of the natural world, as it was the outcome of an infinite arrange of possibilities.⁵⁶⁸ Desdouits illustrates this point clearly when he explained during the Congress how

The problem of the formation of the universe [...] was a problem absolutely *undetermined by the choice of combinations*. It is clear that it has to be an independent cause that, amidst an infinity of *equally possible* solutions, has chosen *one*, thus excluding the others. The series of cosmic phenomena, even as determined as they are today, thus can’t be explained by that determination itself. The determinism of the world is *an effect*, not a *primary cause*. [...] *Freedom alone can explain the production of the forces*, determinism only explains *the transmission*.⁵⁶⁹

By ascribing to God the ultimate freedom to choose the determinism of the natural world out of a plethora of infinite possibilities, neo-Thomists and Catholics in general retained the notion of plurality and ambiguity that was indicative of the early concept of teleology. Moreover, it is this emphasis on the concept of freedom that is the second admonition that needs to be explained, as it helps to understand the complex interplay between Providence and human history that would ultimately influence nationalist historiographies in Quebec and Flanders. On the one hand, neo-Thomists, as

⁵⁶⁷ Théophile Desdouits, *La Philosophie De Kant, D'après Les Trois Critiques* (Paris: Ernest Thorin, Editeur, 1876), pp. 2.

⁵⁶⁸ See Corey Barnes, 'Natural Final Causality and Providence in Aquinas', *New Blackfriars*, 95 (2014), 349-61.

⁵⁶⁹ *Compte Rendu Du Quatimème Congrès Scientifique International Des Catholiques Tenu a Fribourg - (Suisse) Du 16 Au 20 Août 1897*, (Fribourg: Imprimerie et librairie de l'oeuvre de Saint-Paul, 1898), pp. 95.

mentioned earlier, inscribed a unique predetermination to each substance or being in the natural world, and as such, are inclined to progress towards their final end which is the completion of the possible entity into an “ens actuale”, thus constituting a real, objective, entity.⁵⁷⁰ On the other hand, neo-Thomists rejected the idea of a predetermined progress or evolution based on Providence which would render the possibility of human freedom and will non-existent. This notion can be traced back to the original writings of Thomas Aquinas, who stated that “we are masters of our own actions by reason of our being able to choose this or that. But choice regards not the end, but “the means to the end,” as the Philosopher [Aristotle] says (Ethic. iii, 9). Wherefore the desire of the ultimate end does not regard those actions of which we are masters. [*Summa Theologica*, Question 82]” Two elements are crucial to highlight with regards to this conceptualization, and how it would influence the neo-Thomist and subsequent nationalist concepts of teleology. The first element is the distinction Aquinas made between actions based on our own free will, and those that are related to the “desire of the ultimate end”. It should be noted that, according to Aquinas, and the neo-Thomists, this ultimate end for humans was to attain happiness, and that, by their intrinsic nature, humans strive to do good.⁵⁷¹ This was seen by neo-Thomists as a counterpoint to positivistic or individualistic systems, which, as explained by the Irish neo-Thomist Hickey, was founded on the idea that “man always pursues his own private interest; motivated by this motive, good in itself, he searches what is useful to him, and nothing can discern this better than himself.”⁵⁷²

What is crucial to emphasise in Aquinas’ conceptualization however is that by distinguishing between an ultimate end on the one hand, and actions based on an individual’s own will, Aquinas, and by extension neo-Thomists, were able to legitimate a notion of contingency and ambiguity in a Providential worldview.⁵⁷³ While a human strives to attain happiness, this does not mean, as Aquinas states, that every action taken by an individual should be regarded (or reduced) to this overarching, general principle, thus acknowledging that humans do not always act according to their essential nature, allowing for a contingent, historical element in this outlook. Mercier for example kept to the same distinction Aquinas made when he explained “that a *nature* is a substance considered in so far as it is the first intrinsic principle of the activities it is capable of and of the determinations which it may undergo by means of the powers which properly belong to it. There is thus a correspondence

⁵⁷⁰ Christian Wolff, *Philosophia*, pp. 143

⁵⁷¹ John Connolly, 'Aquinas on Happiness and the Will', in *Living without Whymeister Eckhart's Critique of the Medieval Concept of Will*, ed. by John M. Connolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 86-127.

⁵⁷² *Compte Rendu Du Quatimème Congrès Scientifique International*, pp. 171.

⁵⁷³ Ignacio Silva, 'Thomas Aquinas on Natural Contingency and Providence', in *Abraham's Dice: Chance and Providence in the Monotheistic Traditions*, ed. by Karl W. Giberson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 158-72.

between a *nature*, which is the source of activities, and its *end*, which is the purpose and finish of these activities.”⁵⁷⁴ Mercier further elaborated on the intricacies of the activities, stating that a “substance has operative powers which serve as means of action. These operative powers, called *forces*—mechanical, physical, chemical—in the corporeal world, and *faculties* in the case of man, are then immediate principles of action, whereas the substance is the first, mediate principle of action.”⁵⁷⁵ The immediate actions, the faculties, are in line with Aquinas’ original concept, and thus constitute the capability each individual has to take one choice or another, and as such, retain the notions of possibility and ambiguity that consequently grant each individual a sense of historicity, as each choice, when taken, is taken in a specific historical circumstance. What is crucial to understand then is that the Thomist and neo-Thomist conceptualization of free will allowed for a complex interplay between a contingent and teleological perspective on history, allowing on the one hand the freedom for individuals to act on their own accord, not always in congruence with the ultimate teleological progress, whilst simultaneously positing the overall end, i.e. happiness, as natural essence of each individual to progress to, thus allowing for a teleological supplement to the contingent, historical actions.

In addition to the concept of free will, it is Aquinas’ emphasis on the notion of action that is the second element that needs further explanation. By describing the immediate actions – those we are master of – as a reasonable choice that constitutes “the means to the end”, Aquinas, and by consequence the neo-Thomists, ascribed a notion of presentism into the concept, ascribing an active role to the historical individual, as it is only by taking immediate actions that it becomes possible to advance towards the ultimate end. Consequently, this means that the notion of action, and what choices are available, change according to the historical circumstances, thus allowing for the transformation of the concept into new historical, societal and political settings. In this sense, it is illustrating to point to the genesis of Catholic social action during the last decades of the nineteenth century, and the role neo-Thomism played in constituting an emphasis on the notion of (social) action during this period, and how this illustrates the mutability of the notion of action according to different historical circumstances. Catholic social action wanted to provide an answer to liberal theories on the one hand, and socialist and communist mass movements on the other, thereby constituting a Catholic alternative response to the changing societal context of industrialization.⁵⁷⁶ Hickey for example

⁵⁷⁴ Desire Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. 41.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid, pp.40-41.

⁵⁷⁶ See Yvan Lamonde, *Histoire Sociale Des Idées Au Québec, 1896-1929* (Montreal: Fides, 2004); Jean-Philippe Warren, 'Sciences Sociales Et Religions Chrétiennes Au Canada (1890-1960)', *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 57 (2004), pp. 407-24; Lode Wils, *Honderd Jaar Vlaamse Beweging. I: Geschiedenis Van Het Davidsfonds Tot 1914* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1977); pp. 149-171.

concluded his presentation at the 1897 Catholic International Congress by stating that “one thing is clear: the absolute ‘laissez faire’ is over,” and explained that “Leo XIII, in the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, cites and reaffirms the doctrine of Saint Thomas [Aquinas],” prompting the Catholic to conclude that “equity demands that the worker receives housing, clothing and a less arduous life as a compensation for his labour.”⁵⁷⁷ In this sense, the fact that one of the most important pieces on Catholic social action, the *Rerum Novarum*, was founded on (neo) Thomist principles, highlights the influence the philosophy has had on the transformation of Catholic social principles during the last decades of the nineteenth century in the context of industrialization.⁵⁷⁸ What is crucial to highlight then with regards to the conceptualization of free will by Aquinas is twofold. On the one hand, the concept and neo-Thomist adaptation allowed for a contingent notion in a teleological perspective, ascribing historicity and contingency to individual actors based on their own free will. On the other hand, Aquinas’ concept put emphasis on the active role of the individual to address the present societal circumstances so as to further progress the overall teleological process towards its natural end.

In conclusion, the analysis of the genesis and neo-Thomist adaptation of the concept of teleology has highlighted three elements that are crucial to emphasise, as they played an influential role in the transformation and incorporation of the notion of teleology in the nationalist historiographies of Quebec and Flanders. The first element is the notion of contingency and ambiguity that was inextricably related to the concept of teleology. By stressing the importance of plurality and the existence of choice and free will, the neo-Thomist concept of teleology ascribed a sense of historicity and contingency to the overall teleological process, in which the importance of the specific historical circumstances was highlighted as instrumental to the advancement of a specific being towards its natural end. Secondly, this concept of historicity was reflected in the complex interplay neo-Thomists envisioned between Providence and human history, in which individual actions did not necessarily have to correspond with the innate natural tendency to progress toward its end. In this sense, the distinction neo-Thomists made between the mediate actions – i.e. the nature of a being – and the immediate actions – i.e. the historical, contingent, actions – is crucial to emphasise, as it allowed for a complex interplay between individual actions in specific historical circumstances on the one hand, and the general advancement of a being’s nature towards its end on the other hand, and in which the role of Providence as an explanatory factor for the contingent individual actions in a specific historical circumstance was limited. Finally, the emphasis neo-Thomists put on the notion of action as a crucial factor to progress towards the natural end is important to highlight, as it ascribed

⁵⁷⁷ *Compte Rendu Du Quatimème Congrès Scientifique International*, pp. 182-184.

⁵⁷⁸ See Goran Obradović, 'Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*', *Zbornik Radova Pravnog Fakulteta u Nišu*, 55 (2016), pp. 93-104.

an active role to individuals and individual actions for the overall advancement and teleology of a being, thus granting an important role and validity to both social and political actions in a specific historical circumstance, even if, as is clear by the emphasis on ambiguity and contingency in the overall teleological perception, the future was not intelligible. In the following section, we will analyse the influence of these three elements, and point out how the different political contexts played a role in the actions nationalist historians deemed necessary to take in light of their specific historical circumstances, and the overall teleological process of their nation.

IV.II. Teleology in nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders

In this section, we will analyse how the neo-Thomist concept of teleology influenced the nationalist historiographies in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century. The major argument is that the three elements we have discerned earlier in this chapter played an influential role in the conceptualization of teleology in both historiographies. Using the example of the notion of coincidence in Flanders on the one hand, and the role and influence of Providence in Quebec on the other, it will be argued that nationalist historians retained the notion of contingency and ambiguity, and the complex interplay between individual actions and the natural teleological progress that marked the original and neo-Thomist concepts of teleology. Moreover, using the analysis it becomes possible to nuance the traditional representation of nationalist historiographies as constituting a single teleological development towards national independence.⁵⁷⁹ Finally, this section will argue that the neo-Thomist concept of action played an influential role in the political actions of nationalist historians during the interwar period, arguing that due to the different political context, Flemish nationalist historians were inclined to envision their own time as instrumental in the overall teleological progress of the nation, which can help to provide a new explanation as to why Flemish nationalist historians, such as Van Roosbroeck and Elias, collaborated with the German occupier during the Second World War.

IV.II.I. Concept of Coincidence in Flemish nationalist historiography

To understand the importance of ambiguity and contingency in the Flemish nationalist historiography, it is beneficial to analyse the notion of coincidence, and how it was perceived by Flemish nationalist historians, as this helps to illustrate the influence of the neo-Thomist concept of teleology on these historians. A good starting point, and one that immediately highlights the importance of the notion of

⁵⁷⁹ See for example Lode Wils, 'Elias of Het Gevecht Met De Geschiedenis', *Wetenschappelijke Tijdingen*, 51 (1992), 199-200; Jo Tollebeek, 'Historical Representation and the Nation-State in Romantic Belgium (1830-1850)', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 59 (1998), 329-53; Jo Tollebeek, 'Enthousiasme En Evidentie in Negentiende-Eeuwse Belgisch-Nationale Geschiedschrijving', in *De Ijkmeesters. Opstellen over De Geschiedschrijving in Nederland En België* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1994), pp. 61-81.

ambiguity in Flemish nationalist historiography, is Elias's argument against the intelligibility of universal laws in history. Elias explained how

the national development of a volk does not need to be "predestined" nor "logical". Each volk grows under the influence of elements that do not necessarily remain unchanged throughout the centuries. The 'vaticinatio ex eventu' [prophecy out of the event] in this view is only the coronation of the historical fatalism that sees in everything that has come to fruition the logical development of what was included in the nature of the facts and the circumstances. *When studying foregone events one should not focus solely on the historical process: the contexts as such demand our attention as well.*⁵⁸⁰

Out of Elias's description we can immediately assess two elements that are crucial to emphasise with regards to the teleological conceptualization in nationalist historiographies. First, Elias's rejection of the logic or intelligibility of a law that can predict the national teleology of a people is in line with the ambiguity that was ascribed in the earlier concepts of teleology, and, as such, retains the elements that we have assessed earlier with regards to teleology. Secondly, by denouncing the, according to Elias, traditional practice in historiography of "vaticinatio ex eventu", the Flemish nationalist historian emphasised the contingent and pluralist nature of history, and nations in general. By dismissing the fatalistic approach that seeks a logical development and poses a determinist viewpoint in the historical facts and circumstances themselves, Elias retains the element of pluralism in history, by putting emphasis on the fact that the presumed logical outcome was only one of myriad possibilities in a specific historical circumstance. That is why Elias recommended that a historian should not focus solely on the "historical process", but should also consider the circumstances of that specific time, thus acknowledging the existence of multiple possibilities (and outcomes) in a specific historical context. In this sense, by focusing on the circumstances, Elias ascribes, in a similar way as the neo-Thomists did, an element of free choice to historical actors and individuals, as the existence of different possibilities in a specific historical time necessitated a historical actor to make a specific choice. The notion of plurality and free choice in specific historical circumstances is also apparent from Van der Essen, who, in a description of the Burgundian rule of the Low Countries in the fifteenth century, explained how

the possibility had been created so that the Low Countries at the sea, under pressure of the Burgundian [dukes], could become more and more aware of their unity, so that during a certain period in their history they could form one of the most beautiful national States in Western Europe. Alas! A marriage would reduce that possibility greatly: the marriage of the heiress of Burgundy, the duchess Maria, with Maximilian of Habsburg (1477).⁵⁸¹

⁵⁸⁰ Hendrik Elias, *De Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, pp. 19.

⁵⁸¹ Leo Van der Essen, *De Historische Gebondenheid Der Nederlanden* (Anterp: De Sikkels, 1938), pp. 14-15.

Van der Essen's description of the thwarted possibility in the Low Countries to ultimately progress into one nation-state is an illustrative example of how the neo-Thomist concepts of plurality and free choice influenced Flemish historiography. On the one hand, by positing the possibility that the Low Countries could progress into a national state, Van der Essen envisioned the existence of plurality in history, as he acknowledged that the marriage of the duchess Maria with Maximilian of Habsburg resulted in the realization of a different possibility (and national state).⁵⁸² On the other hand, by not dismissing the possibility of a united national state in the Low Countries after the marriage, only reducing its probability, Van der Essen retained the notion of freedom of choice for the historical actors. In this sense, the combination of these two elements illustrates how Van der Essen portrayed history in a similar fashion as Elias, by replacing the fatalistic "vatacinatio ex eventu" with a more ambiguous teleological perspective, in which historical actors – in this case citizens of the Low Countries in the fifteenth century – had the freedom to choose, and thus give form, to the development of the nation.

It is to the definition of what the nation is that we must briefly return, as it helps to illustrate how the concept of coincidence played an influential role in Flemish nationalist historiography, and, as such, highlights the perseverance of the neo-Thomist concept of teleology in these historical works. As we analysed in Chapter II, the nation according to these historians consisted of a complex interplay between the nation's essence and existence.⁵⁸³ What is crucial to emphasise in this interdependence between essence and existence with regards to teleology and coincidence in Flemish nationalist historiography is that, in accordance with the neo-Thomist framework, the nation's essence could be characterized as the entity's nature, and, as such, incorporated the mediate action, the inherent tendency, to progress towards its natural end.⁵⁸⁴ This end, according to Flemish nationalists was the consecration of the essence in a state that granted each individual the possibility and freedom to pursue his own interests, not thwarted by any other national competitors. This is clear in the two possibilities the Flemish literary historian Antoon Jacob ascribed to the relation between a state and a volk, describing how

Either the State *covers* the Volk in which (normal) case Volk and State are confluent, by which through mutual influence the *Nation* emerges: the community then attains the national unity, a pristine mental element. Or the State *suppresses* the Volk, in which (abnormal) case State and Volk are opposed to each

⁵⁸² A fact that becomes clear in the "Alas" outcry of Van der Essen, which could be interpreted as the acknowledgement that his preferred outcome did not occur, although this can't be completely deduced from this paragraph alone.

⁵⁸³ See Appendix 6.

⁵⁸⁴ See Section IV.I.II.

other. The State lacks the nation-stimulating force; conflict with her nation-seeking Volk will not remain impossible.⁵⁸⁵

What is crucial to emphasise in this characterization of the tendency of a volk or nation⁵⁸⁶ to develop towards its natural end is that the State in this characterization is conceived as the external element that acquires its genesis in a specific historical circumstance, and as such, is in itself a contingent element. The Flemish anthropologist Gustaaf Schamelhout for example illustrates this point clearly when he argued that “the state is something deliberate, born out of human arbitrariness and the impulses of the circumstances. From a moral point of view the state is inferior to the volk.”⁵⁸⁷ What is important to point out with regards to the contingency of the state in these representations is that there is not one universal model of a state that can benefit the nation’s essence or a volk, an element that we will also see reappear in Groulx’s comments on the possibility of a French-Canadian state in the future. Moreover, by positing the contingent state as the antithesis to the nation or volk, i.e. the natural essence, Flemish nationalists retained the neo-Thomist framework of mutuality between free will and teleology, i.e. between mediate and immediate actions, and it is in this conceptualization that we have to analyse the concept of coincidence in Flemish nationalist historiography.

Elias exemplifies this duality when he argued for the inclusion of coincidence in the historical analysis. The Flemish nationalist historian, as seen in Chapter III, argued that “the historical examination is founded on a subjective worldview that reconstructs the past on the same principle on which she judges the present.”⁵⁸⁸ He would further elaborate on his definition, explaining how “historical determinism and fatalism often play an exaggerated role in this. One can formulate it as such: what has come to be has become as such because it had to, since it was laid out in the nature, in the essence of the things themselves.”⁵⁸⁹ It is against this principle that the Flemish historian would posit the concept of coincidence, arguing that while “there is part truth in this [conceptualization], one has to distinguish. Coincidence too can play a role in history, as an external factor which can influence the internal development of a complex being.”⁵⁹⁰ By describing coincidence as an external factor that can influence an internal progress of a “complex being” – which can entail both a nation and a historical individual – Elias’s conceptualization of coincidence is a perfect example of how the

⁵⁸⁵ Antoon Jacob, 'Volk, Staat En Natie', pp. 9-10.

⁵⁸⁶ I have pointed out in Chapter II that the different usage of the terms volk and nation (or race) does not discard the overall framework in which these concepts were perceived. Whether or not the nation is a result of an overlap of a volk and state, or it is the result of a harmony between a state and a nation (thus discarding the volk) is irrelevant in this analysis.

⁵⁸⁷ Gustaaf Schamelhout, *De Volkeren Van Europa En De Strijd Der Nationaliteiten. Eerste Deel: Ras En Volk, Taal En Staat, Het Nationaliteitbeginsel: Litauers, Letten, Esten En Finnen* (Amsterdam: Maatschappij voor Goede en Goedkope Literatuur, 1925), pp.95.

⁵⁸⁸ “” Hendrik Elias, *Het Nationaal Gevoel*, pp. 324.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁰ Hendrik Elias, *Het Nationaal Gevoel in de Nederlandsche Historische liederen*, pp.324.

neo-Thomist teleological perspective could be transformed into a nationalist historiography whilst maintaining the intricate elements that we analysed with regards to the neo-Thomist concept of teleology. Out of this description of coincidence, we can further assess two elements that are linked to the overall teleological perspective.

First, by rejecting the traditional portrayal of determinism or fatalism, in which a logical teleology is innate to a being's essence, and positing the relevance and influence of the external on the internal development of an entity, Elias, and Flemish nationalist historians in general, retained the neo-Thomist complex interplay between essence and existence, whilst simultaneously including the ambiguity and contingency that was a consequence of this interdependence between the internal and external contexts of a substance. Secondly, the external factors that can influence a being's teleology can be considered as the results or consequences of a historical actor's choice and decisions. In this sense, the concept of coincidence can be seen as the dialectic between the specific being's choice to develop towards its natural end, and the historical actor's freedom of choice to either thwart or support that essential development. It should be noted that while the actor has the freedom to choose, the consequence of that choice is not always intended, thus reaffirming the contingent nature of the external factors and circumstances on the internal teleology of an entity. This element becomes clear when we assess the figure of the sixteenth-century Spanish general Alexander Farnese in some of the historical accounts of Flemish nationalist historians. The figure of Farnese, a general during the Dutch Revolt in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, was described as a crucial factor in the termination of the development, mentioned earlier in the Burgundian case by Van der Essen, towards one nation in the Low Countries.⁵⁹¹ Van Roosbroeck, analysing the earliest stages of the Revolt in the 1580s, explained how

for Flanders a remarkable and all-changing development of the [war]front took place: the expert general, Alexander Farnese, has conquered the Flemish regions from the Generality [lands]! Hereby the unity with the North has been broken: part of the Burgundian blossom destroyed. And Flanders lost ipso facto the support for the battle for independence. But it is not recommended to pose the unhistorical "what if" on this subject: destiny has judged otherwise.⁵⁹²

The description of Farnese as an expert who would ultimately change the course of history is crucial to emphasise. First, Farnese is a clear example of how an external factor could influence the internal development of an entity or being, and is thus constituted in Flemish nationalist historiography as a coincidence. Secondly, and more importantly, is the notion that Van Roosbroeck, as did other

⁵⁹¹ For more on Farnese, see Violet Soen, 'Reconquista and Reconciliation in the Dutch Revolt: The Campaign of Governor-General Alexander Farnese (1578-1592)', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 16 (2012), 1-22.

⁵⁹² Van Roosbroeck, *Geschiedenis van Vlaanderen*, pp. 13.

nationalist historians, ascribed the notion of coincidence to a single historical individual, i.e. the general Farnese, and described him as an expert. Elias similarly described Farnese as a “skilled diplomat and clever general,” and ascribed the same importance to this figure, as he explained how “he [Farnese] would recover large parts of what had been lost [to the revolutionaries] in previous years.”⁵⁹³ There are two elements that are crucial to highlight in this description, and that help to explain the notion of coincidence in Flemish nationalist historiography, which will be beneficial when analysing Flemish nationalist historians’ motives to collaborate during the Second World War.

First, there is the notion that it was possible for a single individual to alter the course and teleology of an entity or being in history. By ascribing to Farnese, and Farnese alone, the importance of altering the course of history in the Low Countries – the end of the “Burgundian blossom” both Van der Essen and Van Roosbroeck had discerned out of history – Flemish nationalist historians put emphasis on the role and possibilities of single historical individuals to either thwart or develop the progress of a historical entity.⁵⁹⁴ This is illustrated clearly in the publication of the historical work *100 Groote Vlamingen* [100 Great Flemings] by Van Roosbroeck, and in collaboration with other historians who were not necessarily Flemish nationalists.⁵⁹⁵ Van Roosbroeck explained how

A Hundred Great Flemish Individuals line up! A thousand years of history of a volk told not by way of a chronological narration of facts [...] but a thousand years of history, a thousand years of growth, battle, humiliation and victory proclaimed by the inventive vitality of a volk. Poets and painters, sculptors and scholars, architects and politicians, that abundant list of champions who have come to the fore out of the vitality of a conscientious volk.⁵⁹⁶

By positing the different cultural and political “champions” as on the one hand part of the “vitality of a conscientious people”, and on the other hand in their respective historical circumstances – the “thousand years of growth, battle, humiliation and victory” – Van Roosbroeck defined history in this sense not as the “narration of facts”, but as the progress of an entity – in this case the Flemish people or nation – through its specific historical individuals that contributed to its overall teleology by the virtue of their expertise and talent.⁵⁹⁷

Secondly, by ascribing an essential role to historical actors for the teleology of an entity or being, Flemish nationalist historians put emphasis on the freedom of choice for each historical individual, and the consequences actions could have on the internal teleology of a historical entity. In

⁵⁹³ Hendrik Elias, 'Het Verleden Van Het Vlaamsche Volk', in *Vlaanderen Door De Eeuwen Heen* (Antwerp: Standaard Uitgeverij, 1932), p. 27

⁵⁹⁴ Van Roosbroeck, *Geschiedenis van Vlaanderen*, pp. 13

⁵⁹⁵ See Marnix Beyen, 'Een Werk Waarop Ieder Vlaming Fier Kan Zijn?', pp. 411-40.

⁵⁹⁶ Rob Van Roosbroeck, *100 Groote Vlamingen*, pp. 5.

⁵⁹⁷ This can be related to the interplay between the historical actor and the nation as outlined in Chapter II.

this sense, the description of Farnese as an expert proves to be illuminating, as it ascribes to the Spanish general a sense of knowledge to take the, according to Flemish nationalist historians, correct choices in the specific historical circumstances. Consequently, Flemish nationalist historians, as did their French-Canadian counterparts, criticized figures if they had not taken the choice that was, according to them, instrumental for the further advancement of the historical entity, leaving it in a weakened state. Elias for example ascribed one of the major reasons for the (partial) failure of the Dutch Revolt to the “selfish politics of Holland and Zeeland for whom the war had become a source of income and wealth.”⁵⁹⁸ He further explained that “while the Southern and Eastern Netherlands were being conquered, they have not responded forcefully enough to defend these parts: the regional particularism was still too strong and the awareness of unity too weak.”⁵⁹⁹ In addition to the limited response of the regions of Holland and Zeeland, Elias further explained the importance of the choice of the Spanish King Philips, who, “after the arduous conquest of the South, and when the situation became critical for the North”, decided to “change his plan of attack and shifted his political priorities to France: possibly [constituting] the salvation of Holland and Zeeland.”⁶⁰⁰ By emphasising the importance of the choices made by the regions of Holland and Zeeland and the Spanish King, Elias portrayed the further development of the history of the Southern Netherlands – and particularly the Flemish regions – as the effect of a number of choices that had been made during the early decades of the Dutch Revolt. What is important to keep in mind is that according to the Flemish nationalist historians both historical actors had the freedom of choice to pursue certain goals in the specific historical circumstances – Holland striving for more wealth for example – that could unintentionally alter the teleology of a specific historical entity, in this case the Flemish people. In this sense, a historical actor’s freedom of choice, and the possible unintended consequences it could have for the teleology of a historical entity – the result of the choices of Holland and King Philips was that it left Flanders “depleted and destroyed, mentally and materially” – are crucial elements to keep in mind for the overall teleological perspective of Flemish nationalist historians, and it is this emphasis on freedom of choice in combination with teleology that, as we will see later, played a crucial role in the further political careers of some of the nationalist historians, particularly Elias.

In conclusion, the analysis of the notion of coincidence in Flemish nationalist historiography has shown how the elements of ambiguity and free choice were instrumental in constituting this particular concept in the nationalist historiography. By describing coincidence as an external factor that could alter the internal teleology of a historical entity, Flemish nationalist historians on the one

⁵⁹⁸ Elias, ‘Het Verleden van het Vlaamsche Volk’, pp. 28.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰ Elias, ‘Het Verleden van het Vlaamsche Volk’, pp. 28.

hand retained the neo-Thomist complex interplay between teleology and contingency and on the other hand transformed the notion of free choice into a specific historical concept, as coincidence implied that a specific choice with a specific outcome had to be made. Moreover, by letting coincidence play an important role in their overall teleological narratives, Flemish historians put emphasis on the importance an individual could have when taking a specific choice in a specific historical circumstance, and the consequences that choice could have for the overall development of a historical entity. These two elements, ambiguity and freedom of choice, would, as we will see later, also prove instrumental in the political careers of some of the nationalist historians – Elias in particular – and it is also these two elements that we have to take into account when analysing the French-Canadian nationalist historians, and their concept of providential history.

IV.II.II. The notion of Providence in French-Canadian nationalist historiography

To understand the prominence and role of Providence in French-Canadian nationalist historiography, it is first of all beneficial to briefly outline how French-Canadian nationalism and Catholicism were intertwined. Early twentieth-century French-Canadian nationalism has traditionally been described as inextricably linked to Catholicism, indicating that the French-Canadian national identity was essentially a Catholic identity.⁶⁰¹ Consequently, this meant that the nation's teleology was indissolubly linked to the general Catholic teleological perspective, which was the salvation of humanity. In this sense, researchers have traditionally put emphasis on the description by nationalists of the French-Canadian nation as a chosen people whose ultimate goal of survival and development would also benefit the overall progress of humanity towards its salvation.⁶⁰² A clear example of this connection is the work of the French-Canadian ultramontane Louis François Laflèche who wrote in 1886 that “our mission as a people has an essentially religious character. Our national salvation as much as our eternal salvation depends on our attachment to the faith of our fathers.”⁶⁰³

It is based on this link between Catholic salvation and nationalist progress that researchers have described Providence, and it has led to a specific characterization of Providence and teleology in French-Canadian nationalist historiography. Providence as a force in French-Canadian historiography has been described as absolute, meaning that everything in history had been preordained by God.

⁶⁰¹ See Paul-André Linteau, *Histoire Du Québec Contemporain*, pp. 700-707; Monica Heller, 'La Foi, La Race, La Langue Catholic Ethnonationalism in Francophone Canada (1926–1965, with an Interjection from 2000)', in *Paths to Post-Nationalism: A Critical Ethnography of Language and Identity*, ed. by Monica Heller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 52-73.

⁶⁰² See for example Chris Lorenz, 'Double Trouble', pp. 57-61; Jean-Pierre Gaboury, *Le Nationalisme De Lionel Groulx*, pp. 91-134.

⁶⁰³ Louis François Laflèche, *Quelques Considérations Sur Les Rapports De La Société Civile Avec La Religion Et La Famille* (Montréal: E. Senécal, 1886), pp. 261

Moreover, God played a very active role in this French-Canadian nationalist historiography, as the historian Serge Gagnon for example illustrated by explaining how in Groulx's historical narrative, "whenever all seemed lost, Providence stepped in."⁶⁰⁴ Historian Michael Bock ascribed a similar providential aspect to Groulx (and by consequence French-Canadian nationalism) when he argued that "the deeper logic of Groulx's nationalist thought" had resided in the idea that "Providence had entrusted to the French-Canadian people a founding mission, that of propagating the Catholic faith and French civilization in America."⁶⁰⁵ What we see in these traditional descriptions of Providence in French-Canadian historiography is an absolute teleological perspective in which God, as having foreseen everything in the universe – thus including human history – played an active role to support and further develop the chosen French-Canadian people to attain their natural end, and contribute to the overall salvation of humanity. This characterization becomes particularly clear in the traditional analysis of the Conquest of 1760. Groulx's colleague, Thomas Chapais had explained for example how the demise of New France was destined, as he pointed out how due to "the conditions in which Europe had been after the Seven Years War, nothing could make the possibility of its [French Canada] resurrection feasible."⁶⁰⁶ Chapais would conclude his assessment by stating that "our destiny had taken an irrevocable turn. Providence, which governs the events following a mysterious plan, had decreed this change of sovereignty against which we could not rebel. It forced us to accept the fact and to try and adapt to the new regime."⁶⁰⁷ By ascribing the Conquest to Providence and rejecting the possibility of the French Canadians to rebel against the providential decree, Chapais can be considered as a typical example of how researchers have traditionally characterized the role of Providence in French-Canadian historiography.

The problem with this description however when referring to Groulx and other French-Canadian nationalists is that it fails to consider the influence of the neo-Thomist framework, and the subsequent elements of ambiguity and human freedom that characterized its concept of teleology. It should be noted first that Groulx and others still ascribed a role to Providence in their historical works. Groulx for example made this point very clear when he stated that "everything is providential in history."⁶⁰⁸ The problem however is that the notion of Providence in nationalist historiography differed from the traditional portrayal due to the neo-Thomist influence on the nationalist framework, and subsequently, their concept of teleology. To understand the relevance, it is beneficial to briefly

⁶⁰⁴ Serge Gagnon, *Quebec and its Historians*, pp. 113.

⁶⁰⁵ Michel Bock, *A Nation Beyond Borders*, pp. 55.

⁶⁰⁶ Chapais, pp. 21.

⁶⁰⁷ Thomas Chapais, *Discours Et Conférences*, pp. 21.

⁶⁰⁸ Lionel Groulx, *Notre Maître, Le Passé*, pp.124-125.

address how (neo) Thomists envisioned the role of Providence, and how this coalesced with their emphasis on human freedom. First, it is important to note that (neo) Thomists still ascribed to God the role of prime cause, as the Absolute Being that had created the universe and nature *ex nihilo*.⁶⁰⁹ This perception was also apparent from the French-Canadian nationalists, as Groulx explained his comment on providential history by arguing that “the absolute universality of Providence is deduced from the universality of the supreme causality.”⁶¹⁰

Ascribing the role of prime cause to God however does not constitute, as is traditionally assumed, an active role to Providence. On the contrary, because Thomists emphasised the existence of human freedom and will, the role of Providence in human history was limited. Aquinas made this point clear by describing the difference between the human will and God’s will, explaining how “the human will cannot be conformed to the will of God so as to equal it, but only so as to imitate it. [...] and human action is conformed to the divine, insofar as it is becoming to the agent—and this is by way of imitation, not by way of equality. [*Summa Theologica*, I-II, Question 19]” By not equalizing divine and human will, humanity – and its history – is ascribed a certain freedom: contrary to Chapais’s statement, in the (neo) Thomist interpretation of Providence the historical individuals that underwent the regime change during the Conquest had the freedom to rebel if they so desired. This is an important element, as it grants the freedom of choice to the historical actors, and allows them the freedom to either confirm or reject a certain path given by Providence. Groulx illustrates this element clearly when he described that “history is the work of man, the free man, but operating under the hand of God. The sovereignty of the divine action however does not constrain nor limit humanity’s freedom.”⁶¹¹ In this sense, Groulx’s comment that “everything is providential in history” has to be interpreted from the neo-Thomist point of view that, while Providence’s actions are sovereign, it does not infringe on humanity’s freedom of choice, and thus grants historical actors the freedom to pursue certain goals or ends in history.⁶¹² Two elements need to be further explained with regards to this description.

The first element is the justification of how the sovereignty of both Providence and humanity allowed for the existence of contingent actions in history. Aquinas raised this issue himself, when he explained how

⁶⁰⁹ This is related to the Aristotelian philosophy, see Corey Barnes, 'Natural Final Causality and Providence in Aquinas', pp. 349-61; William Brenner, 'Aquinas' "First Way": An Exposition and Wittgensteinian Assessment', *New Blackfriars*, 98 (2016), pp. 285-93.

⁶¹⁰ “L’universalite absolue de la Providence se deduit de l’universalite de la causalite supreme”, Lionel Groulx, *Notre Maître, Le Passé*, pp.124-125.

⁶¹¹ Lionel Groulx, *Notre Maître, Le Passé*, pp.126..

⁶¹² *Ibid.*, pp.124-125.

Some, wishing to pronounce upon divine knowledge from the viewpoint of our own way of knowing, have said that God does not know future contingents. This opinion cannot stand, for it would eliminate providence over human affairs, which are contingent. Consequently, others have said that God has knowledge of all futures, but that all take place necessarily, otherwise His knowledge of them would be subject to error. But neither can this opinion stand, for it would destroy free choice and there would be no need to ask advice. Moreover, it would be unjust to punish or to give rewards in proportion to merit when everything takes place necessarily. [*De Veritate*, Question II, Reply]⁶¹³

This is of particular pertinence to Groulx's statement, as he explained on the one hand that all history is providential, whilst simultaneously claiming that humanity is not constrained in its freedom. Aquinas' answer can help to shed light on Groulx's statements, and can help to explain why this posed no dilemma in his philosophy of history. For Aquinas, the solution to this dilemma was situated in the characterization of God as infinitely present, thus resolving the issue of the knowledge of possible future contingents by making God himself timeless.⁶¹⁴ Aquinas explained how "something is known as future when an order of past and future stands between the event and the knowledge. This order, however, cannot be found between the divine knowledge and any contingent thing whatsoever; but the relation of the divine knowledge to anything whatsoever is like that of present to present." [*De Veritate*, Article 12] In this sense, Groulx's characterization of all history as providential whilst emphasising the existence of human freedom becomes intelligible, as it can be seen as the acknowledgement that history is providential in the sense that an infinitely present God resides over history, but grants the historical actors their historicity and freedom to pursue their own choices, without necessarily actively interfering in, or, as Chapais described, decreeing a certain direction.

This leads to the second element, the relation between teleology and human freedom and action in Groulx's characterization of providential history. An important notion to explain is that, while Providence, contrary to traditional portrayals, did not intervene directly into human history – as this would infringe on human freedom and choice – there was still a certain teleology in history towards which humanity developed, namely the salvation of the nation and humanity. In this sense, nationalist historians such as Groulx adhered to the traditional connection between religion and nationalism that characterized French-Canadian historiography, but with one specific difference: the freedom of choice to deter from the path to salvation, and thus towards extinction. This becomes clear in Groulx's characterization of the Conquest. Groulx describes how "our ancestors had to choose, either

⁶¹³ Also see Gloria Frost, 'Aquinas and Scotus on the Source of Contingency', in *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy, Volume 2*, ed. by Robert Pasnau (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 46-65.

⁶¹⁴ See Morag Simpson, 'Thomas Aquinas' Concept of Freedom in the Context of His Treatment of God's Knowledge of Future Contingents' (University of Glasgow, 2001).

perpetuate itself as an autonomous ethnic group, or let itself be absorbed by the conquering race. They have opted for their French survival.”⁶¹⁵ The difference with Chapais’s explanation of the Conquest is that Providence did not predetermine, nor decree the choice of the French-Canadian people, and, as such, the freedom to choose a direction was entirely left to the historical actors. It should be noted that the freedom of choice does not discard the traditional characterization of the French-Canadian people as a chosen people. Groulx for example explains that “higher than all the human protections rests the noble guard of our history, the Providence of God.”⁶¹⁶ In this sense, Providence can still act in history, as long as it does not infringe upon human freedom. Moreover, based on this definition we can understand the relevance of the concept of miracles in French-Canadian historiography, which, as Laferrière stated, constituted a metaphysical act, and, as such, had to be ascribed to Providence.⁶¹⁷ Miracles, as such, constitute the intricate relation that existed between providential teleology and human freedom in French-Canadian nationalist historiography.

In conclusion, we can assess that French-Canadian nationalist historiography was still inscribed in the traditional historiography, as it adhered to the concepts of Providence and salvation that had characterized the French-Canadian historiographical practice before the first half of the twentieth century. However, due to the influence of the neo-Thomist framework and elements of ambiguity and human freedom, the concept of Providence was adapted and transformed to stress the existence of human choice which consequently influenced the analysis and interpretation of the historical events that had been instrumental in the traditional portrayal of the role of Providence in French-Canadian history, most notably the Conquest. The final question that now remains is how the neo-Thomist emphasis on ambiguity and human freedom and choice influenced the political philosophies of the nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders, and how the concept of teleology influenced their political viewpoints.

IV.III. Teleology and Politics: the need (or lack) for action in Groulx and Elias

The final question that needs to be addressed is how the neo-Thomist emphasis on freedom of choice, and the necessity of individual action for the development and teleology of an entity influenced the political careers and philosophies of nationalist historians. In particular, we will compare the Flemish nationalist Hendrik Elias, who would collaborate with the German occupier during the Second World War, with Lionel Groulx, who proved instrumental for the development of the nationalist movements

⁶¹⁵ Lionel Groulx, *Vers L’émancipation*, pp. 296.

⁶¹⁶ Lionel Groulx, *Lendemain De Conquête. Cours D’histoire Du Canada À L’université De Montréal* (Montreal: Bibliothèque de l’Action française 1920), pp. 235

⁶¹⁷ Second theorem in Appendix 5.

of the 1930s.⁶¹⁸ What will become clear is that because of the (geo)political differences, Elias was more inclined to consider his own period as instrumental in progressing the nation's teleology, and pursue political action (and collaboration), contrary to Groulx who retained the ambiguous (neo-Thomist) elements that characterized his philosophy of history, and as such, rejected direct political action in favour of the education of the younger generation, so as to prepare them to take up the political responsibilities in the future.

IV.III.I. Groulx and the future French State

During a speech in 1937 Groulx said one of his most famous and controversial phrases when he declared that "whether they want it or not, our French state, we will have it."⁶¹⁹ The phrase has led to divergent conclusions regarding Groulx's political stance, ranging from a plea for separatism to a reformation of the existing Confederation.⁶²⁰ It is crucial, I believe, to see this statement in relation to his philosophy of history, and the neo-Thomist concept of teleology, as it can help to shed some new light on Groulx's remark. It is first of all beneficial to point out that Groulx made the comments during a speech in which he outlined the historical similarities of his own time with the Conquest of 1760. Groulx confirms his providential stance by reiterating how certain "admirable providential arrangements would help the effort of this little, audacious group."⁶²¹ The reference to the Conquest is an important element, as it ties the notion of a future French state to Groulx's providential philosophy of history, and indicates that we have to consider Groulx's conceptualization of teleology when assessing this remark.

This becomes clear when we consider what exactly the French state Groulx describes entailed. It is important to note that during the speech Groulx marked different points in history when the opportunity arose for the French-Canadians to develop their own French state. Regarding the 1791 Constitutional Act, which reformed the Quebec territory, Groulx explained that "1791 brought them [French-Canadians] a beginning of political freedom and, theoretically, the elevation of its province into a French state."⁶²² This notion of a possible French state persisted in Groulx's assessment of Quebec history, when reflecting on the British North America Act of 1867 he stated that the Act "could have, and should have served as a springboard for a new impetus towards autonomy and a more complete fulfilment of our French reality."⁶²³ The characterization of the British North America Act as

⁶¹⁸ See Mathieu Noël, *Lionel Groulx Et Le Réseau Indépendantiste Des Années 1930*.

⁶¹⁹ Lionel Groulx, 'Notre État Français, Nous L'aurons (Juin 1937)', in *Les Grands Discours De L'histoire Du Québec*, ed. by Paul Terrien (Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2010), pp. 219.

⁶²⁰ Jean-Pierre Gaboury, 'L'état Français Ou Lionel Groulx Et La Souveraineté Du Québec', *L'Action nationale*, 57 (1968), pp. 948

⁶²¹ Lionel Groulx, 'Notre État Français', pp. 212.

⁶²² Ibid.

⁶²³ Ibid, pp. 213.

a failed opportunity to further progress towards the fulfilment of a French state highlights how French-Canadian history is envisioned in light of the freedom of choice for historical actors. In the case of the 1867 Act, Groulx, by characterizing the historical event as a failed opportunity – it should have served as a springboard, but didn't – concluded that in this specific case, the historical individuals had chosen incorrectly, and, consequently, the nation as an entity did not further progress towards its telos, the complete fulfilment of the French reality.

This leads to a second characteristic in Groulx's description of the French state, the ambiguity with which Groulx described the ultimate fulfilment of the French reality. What is important to point out in Groulx's portrayal is that the notion of the French state is essentially grounded in its historicity. This is a consequence of Groulx's philosophy of history, in which, due to the existence of human freedom and choice, a state is essentially constituted by historical actors, and, as such, is subjected to the historical circumstances. In other words, because there can be no absolute, timeless French state in Groulx's definition, the state has to be transformed, as is clear by the fact that Groulx grounded his ideal French state in two different historical circumstances, which could have led to different realizations in the different contexts. Moreover, Groulx distinguished the state clearly from the nation, and, as such, grounded it prominently in the historical circumstances, as a historicized entity, as is clear when he explained how "the State, as is natural, performs political rather than national tasks", indicating once again, as outlined in Chapter II, the interdependence between the essential nation on the one hand, and the existential state on the other hand, which was, by consequence, always historicized.⁶²⁴

This leads to the ambiguity in Groulx's remark that they will have a French state in the future. Groulx, due to the realization in his philosophy of history that individuals have the freedom of choice, and can thus reject the progress of the French-Canadian people towards an autonomous state (however defined), refrained from specifying what exactly this state entailed. In this sense, Groulx could only point to the essential traits of the French-Canadian nation, as we have outlined in Chapter II, which, if the historical actors and individuals chose correctly would lead to the complete fulfilment of the French-Canadian people via the historically defined state. That is why Groulx, as a historian, deemed it crucial to inform the French-Canadian citizens of the essential elements of their past, so as to prepare them to choose correctly when the opportunity arose. Groulx made his intentions clear when he explained how

⁶²⁴ Lionel Groulx, 'L'histoire De La Vie Nationale', in *Dix Ans D'action Française* ed. by Lionel Groulx (Montreal: Bibliothèque de l'Action française, 1926), pp. 236.

For us, we have strived to understand the inspirations of the past and of the present time; we have summarized the merits and hopes of our ancestors, and, strengthened with these insights and the support, we put forward to Francophone Quebec the destiny which we believe it deserves. We offer this destiny above all to the youth of our race, to the thoughtful youth, architect and labourer of great things. If this ideal suits her, may she make it the essence of her efforts, and help her to not miss her defining moment.⁶²⁵

What is crucial to emphasise in this teleological characterization is that Groulx ascribed the importance of forming the French state to the French-Canadian youth, and, as such, limited his own political involvement in the process. Groulx defined his own role as laying bare the national essence – to make the past and present intelligible from this perspective – and inform and educate the future generations so as to prepare them to make the right choices when the defining moment occurred.⁶²⁶ In this sense, Groulx's comment of "our French state, we will have it," can be characterized as an archetypical example of how the ambiguous (neo-Thomist) concept of teleology led to a portrayal of a distant future in which the nation's telos would ultimately be reached if the French-Canadian people continued to adhere to the nation's essence, as this would inform them to pursue the right choices when the historical circumstances allowed them to. Moreover, in this conceptualization, the historian himself remained a political bystander whose main task was to inform and educate the youth so as to guarantee the future existence of the essential nation.

IV.III.II. Elias and the Will of the Nation

In Flanders, a different development with regards to the connection between teleology and politics occurred. The first element is that Flemish nationalist historians, more than their French-Canadian counterparts, stressed the volatility and importance of their own time. Van Roosbroeck for example legitimated the *History of Flanders* by explaining how "Flanders needs, especially in these times when a cataclysmic storm of post-war events has threatened all historical values, more than ever a history of its past."⁶²⁷ This emphasis on the present time as "cataclysmic" is an indication of how the Flemish context differed from the French-Canadian. There are three elements that need to be further explained that highlight the difference, and which can serve as a subsequent explanation as to why Elias pursued a political career, and collaborated during the Second World War. The first is the legacy of the First World War in the development of Flemish nationalism, and how this affected Flemish

⁶²⁵ Lionel Groulx, 'Notre Avenir Politique', *L'Action française*, 7 (1922), pp. 25.

⁶²⁶ The tragic irony is that Groulx would ultimately reject the French-Canadian nationalists of the 1960s, seeing it as a break with his own conception of the French-Canadian nation, see Lionel Groulx, *Chemins De L'avenir* (Montreal: Fides, 1964), pp. 8.

⁶²⁷ Van Roosbroeck, *Geschiedenis van Vlaanderen*, pp. 7-8.

nationalists. Elias himself indicates the importance of the Great War, as he explained, “then came the [First World] war”, stressing how “in the relation between Walloon and Flemings, in the relations between the Netherlands and Belgium it has brought a deeply profound change.”⁶²⁸

The importance of the First World War, and the collaboration of a number of Flemish nationalists during the War, contributes to the second element that differentiates Flanders from Quebec, i.e. the political instability that marked the Belgian interwar period. While Quebec had experienced political instability in the interwar period, the instability of the Belgian state, which had known twenty-two different cabinets during this period, and which was marked by growing political and social tensions, can help to explain why Van Roosbroeck characterized his own period as “cataclysmic,” and gives an indication that there was a sense of urgency amongst Flemish nationalists which had been absent from Groulx, as he put the existence of a French state in a (not so) distant future.⁶²⁹ This element of urgency, and the notion of importance of the own present time was further strengthened by the geopolitical difference between the two cases. A crucial element that contributed to the idea of urgency in Flemish nationalist historiography was the fact that there was a direct influence of Nazi Germany. Through the practice of *Westforschung*, which can be defined as a research tradition in Germany to redefine the borders of the Low Countries, and incorporate a pan-Germanic vision, there was the idea that, with the help of the German state, the moment could arise quickly for Flemish nationalists to attain independence.⁶³⁰ Moreover, it is important to note that Van Roosbroeck had a close connection to one of the main proponents of this German tradition, Franz Petri.⁶³¹ What is crucial to understand about the practice of *Westforschung*, and the geopolitical presence of Germany, is that it elevated the notion of urgency amongst Flemish nationalists, and strengthened their belief that their own present time, which was “cataclysmic,” was instrumental in furthering the teleology of the Flemish nation.

It is in accordance with this notion of urgency that resulted from the different context that we should consider Elias’s concept of teleology, and how, in combination with the notion of urgency, his

⁶²⁸ Hendrik Elias, *De Geschiedenis Der Nederlanden*, pp. 12.

⁶²⁹ See Hans Blom, and Emiel Lamberts, *Geschiedenis Van De Nederlanden*. 5 edn (Baarn: HBuitgevers, 2010); Els Witte, Alain Meynen, and Dirk Luyten, *Politieke Geschiedenis Van België*, pp. 155-246; 1 Jeffrey Cormier, and Philippe Couton, 'The Limits of Quebec Nationalism, 1918–39', pp. 47-74.

⁶³⁰ See Hubert Roland, 'Propagande Et Universités : La Westforschung Et La Belgique (1933-1945)', *Textyles*, 26-27 (2005), 153-58; B. Dietz, H. Gabel, and U. Tiedau, „*Westforschung*“ Eine Diskussion Zur Völkisch-Nationalistischen Historiografie in Deutschland (Berlin: Humboldt-Universität Berlin, 2005); Peter Schöttler, *Geschichtsschreibung Als Legitimationswissenschaft 1918 - 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997).

⁶³¹ Armand Van Nimmen, *Rob Van Roosbroeck En Tijdgenoten*, pp. 91-93. Also see Ivo Schöffer, *Het Nationaal-Socialistische Beeld Van De Geschiedenis Der Nederlanden: Een Historiografische En Bibliografische Studie* (Utrecht: HES, 1978).

conceptualization of his nation's telos legitimated his subsequent political career. To understand this connection, we need to further explain two elements. The first is Elias's unique perspective on teleology and nationalist historiography.⁶³² Contrary to other historians who adhered to the principle of one progressing nation, Elias believed that a nation could evolve based on changing historical circumstances. He illustrates this point when he described how

the characteristic of a national community for us lays in the conscience of the [shared] interests of the community, and in its will to maintain and develop them. This idea and this will are the result of a number of influences (race, language, religion, fidelity to the dynasty, historical unity, economic and social interests, etc...) that not always had the same importance or influence. Because of this we fully accept the evolutionary possibilities of this national conscience and arrive at a succession of different national communities in the Netherlands.⁶³³

For Elias, history consisted of a succession of different national communities, each conditioned by a historically defined will and idea that would evolve or falter based on the historical circumstances. This evolutionary perspective leads to the second, and most important element, the existence of a historically defined national will. As Elias explained, each national community consisted of a will to maintain and develop it. In this sense, the will to progress, the teleology of the national community, is in itself historically grounded, and, as a result, changed depending on the historical circumstances. Moreover, this also meant that Elias envisioned his own period as a historically defined community with a will to progress, and it is in this notion that we can find his legitimation for ultimately pursuing a political career.

For Elias, his own national community had commenced with the French Revolution. It is a period in which the historian saw changes that were "drastically fundamental."⁶³⁴ Elias believed that the French Revolution marked the beginning of a period of French dominance that would slowly awaken a new sense of will and solidarity amongst the Flemish community, finally culminating in the creation of the Flemish Movement after the Belgian independence of 1830. As Elias stated, "1830 – apart from the French period – meant the beginning of a completely new orientation that had no connection to earlier traditions, not even to the French period."⁶³⁵ The creation of the Flemish Movement was thus the consecration of the new community's will and shared interests. Elias described for example how the Flemish Movement had a "social mission. It wants to [...] awaken the

⁶³² See Lode Wils, 'Elias of Het Gevecht Met De Geschiedenis', pp. 193-209; Bruno De Wever, 'Hendrik Elias: Historicus in De Politiek', pp. 327-36.

⁶³³ Hendrik Elias, *Onze Wording Tot Natie*, pp. 8-9.

⁶³⁴ Hendrik Elias, 'Het Verleden Van Het Vlaamsche Volk', pp. 34.

⁶³⁵ Elias, *Onze Wording tot Natie*, pp. 7.

national conscience of its folk, and, through the use of the mother tongue by all classes in society, achieve national unity.”⁶³⁶ Moreover, in describing the Flemish Movement in its totality, Elias pointed out how it should be conceived as “the history of the growing awareness of the Flemish folk as nation in its development towards a normal state.”⁶³⁷ This normal state in the present historical circumstances comprised of a Flemish independent state, and, as such, constituted the most essential teleological trait of his own national community’s idea and will. Elias illustrates this notion clearly when he stressed that the “absolute necessity” of his time was first and foremost “that Flanders, in order to survive, needs political independence. This is the first and only goal we must consider: everything else must be supplemental to this.”⁶³⁸

It is based on this teleological perspective that we have to consider the three elements that distinguished the Flemish context from Quebec, and can help to explain why Elias pursued a political career and ultimately collaborated during the Second World War. For Elias, the Great War had constituted a new phase in the development of his national community’s idea and will. As he explained himself, one of the most important consequences of the war was that “we can only ascertain that the Flemish idea has awoken [...] We still lack any clarity or sense of destiny; it is a chaos of ideas and wills that indicate a time of transition and immaturity.”⁶³⁹ In this onset of immaturity and unclarity, the interwar context proved to be crucial in understanding Elias’s further actions, as the three elements we discussed earlier contributed to his belief that the historical circumstances were ultimately directing the national community into a certain direction, and Elias had no choice but to follow suit. The political instability that occurred in Belgium during the interwar period, combined with his belief that his historically defined national community sought political independence, strengthened Elias’s sense of urgency to pursue a political career to contribute to his nation’s teleology, and believed that, with the help of the German occupier, it became possible to constitute a politically independent Flemish state. It is in this context that we should consider his motive to join the Flemish national Union in the 1930s, ultimately becoming its leader in 1942.⁶⁴⁰ It is beneficial to note, as a final element, that Elias continued to adhere to his philosophy of history, and the notion that changing historical circumstances develop new national communities, to the detriment and destruction of the former, when he wrote to the German occupier in 1943,

⁶³⁶ Ibid., pp. 84.

⁶³⁷ Ibid., pp. 14.

⁶³⁸ Elias, *Onze Wording tot Natie*, pp. 17.

⁶³⁹ Elias, 'Het Verleden Van Het Vlaamsche Volk', pp. 76.

⁶⁴⁰ See Pieter-Jan Verstraete, *Hendrik Jozef Elias: Biografie* (Kortrijk: 2005); Bruno De Wever, *Greep Naar De Macht*, pp. 547-550.

What does the leader of the VNV who is constantly rallying for labour and blood and who acts as assurance for its politics, have to offer his volk? Who gives him the guarantee that he – and with him his entire movement – will not be tossed aside as a squeezed lemon? [...] I myself have already drawn my conclusion: it is better for my Movement to perish with a clear idea than wither away in shadiness.⁶⁴¹

By concluding that it was better for his (national) movement to perish, Elias recognized the possibility of a changing historical context in which a new national community, with a different idea and will, could arise, and believed that his only option was to perish with the predecessor, so as to allow for the evolution and development of a new national community. In conclusion, the analysis of Elias and Groulx illustrates how the different political and social context led to a different interpretation of their own present time, which, in accordance with the teleological concept, influenced Elias' political actions, believing that the moment had arrived to seize the opportunity to advance the nation's teleology, a moment which Groulx, in a different context, ascribed to a future time, and, as such, granted the responsibility to a future generation.

IV.IV. Conclusion

In this chapter we have argued that the neo-Thomist concept of teleology, marked by the notions of ambiguity and human freedom and choice, played an important role in the Flemish and Quebec nationalist historiographical frameworks. Using the case studies of coincidence and Providence, it has become clear that the nationalist historians' concept of teleology, contrary to traditional descriptions, was profoundly marked by an element of ambiguity. Moreover, by stressing the importance of human freedom, nationalist historians in both regions were more inclined to historicize the events and actors and allowed for a contingent development of their nation, contrary to the traditional characterization of the predetermination of an essential nation. In a final section, we have explored how exactly this concept of teleology related to the political philosophies and actions of two specific historians, Groulx and Elias. What has become clear is that because of the different (geo)political contexts, Flemish nationalist historians were more inclined to envision their own time as a crucial phase in the development of their nation, and, consequently, deemed it necessary to pursue a political career so as to contribute to the overall teleology of their nation. In this sense, the final section contributes to one of the major arguments of this thesis by illustrating that the different political contexts heavily influenced the adaptation and transformation of a shared historiographical tradition. In conclusion, what this chapter has argued is that the neo-Thomist concept of teleology, clearly influencing both nationalist historiographies, contributed to a different political development, as a result of the different political contexts, and were thus malleable to different contexts.

⁶⁴¹ Wils, 'Elias of Het Gevecht Met De Democratie', pp. 38.

General Conclusion

On May 16, 1940, the library of the Catholic University of Leuven was once again in flames. In the battle for Leuven during the Second World War, the library had once again been struck, causing massive destruction to the newly erected building, and the loss of hundreds of thousands of books.⁶⁴² Similar to the aftermath of the First World War, the library would ultimately be rebuilt, but the neo-Thomist dominance, the “great seat of learning”, would diminish in influence in the historiographies of Quebec and Flanders.⁶⁴³ A number of reasons contributed to this. The foundation of new historiographical institutions and journals in both Quebec and Flanders after the Second World War – most notably the *Institut d’histoire de l’Amérique française* in Quebec in 1946 – gave a new impetus to the practice of historiography in both regions, and reduced the influence of neo-Thomism. This diminishing importance was further enhanced by the changes in the Catholic world in the aftermath of the Second World War, with the Second Vatican Council ending the monopoly of neo-Thomist philosophy in the Catholic world.⁶⁴⁴ In this sense, while the Second World War should not be considered as a hard break-up of the traditional historiography, certain changing contexts indicate that the period following the Second World War constituted a new direction in the historiographical practice in Quebec and Flanders.

While the neo-Thomist centre in Leuven would diminish in influence following the Second World War, this thesis has shown how instrumental and important neo-Thomist philosophy and concepts have been to the nationalist historiographies in Quebec and Flanders, illustrating the inextricable convergence between nationalism and Catholicism that characterized the two historiographical practices during the first half of the twentieth century. It is beneficial, as a final

⁶⁴² Chris Coppens, *Leuven University Library: 1425-2000* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), pp. 320-321.

⁶⁴³ Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, pp. ix.

⁶⁴⁴ Ralph McInerny, 'Thomism', in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, ed. by Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper and Philip L. Quinn (Chichester: Blackwell, 2010), pp. 193-194; Paul Morrissey, 'The Sapiential Dimension of Theology According to St. Thomas', *New Blackfriars*, 93 (2012), 309-23.

exercise, to reflect on some of the main elements that have been argued and analysed in this thesis, so as to emphasise how the importance and influence of neo-Thomism can contribute to the general analysis of historiography in Quebec and Flanders, and provide new insights and arguments to the general characterization of (nationalist) historiography during this period.

A first element that can be assessed is the connection that existed between Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century, and their inclusion in a shared Catholic network during this period. The analysis of Groulx and his correspondents has illustrated how the Catholic University of Leuven played an important role in the education and formation of a large number of French-Canadian nationalists during the first half of the twentieth century. The role of the Catholic University of Leuven has illustrated two crucial elements with regards to the French-Canadian nationalist historiography. First, it has shown that a number of French-Canadian nationalist historians did receive a formal historical training during this period, and, as such, the traditional portrayal of French-Canadian nationalist historiography during the first half of the twentieth century has to be nuanced. The analysis of the French-Canadian historian Joseph Ernest Laferrière has illustrated how influential the Catholic University of Leuven proved to be to French-Canadian historiography, and how the writings and concepts used by Belgian Catholic historians had an enormous impact on the conceptualization and practice of history in Quebec. Secondly, the mobility of the Catholic French-Canadian nationalists illustrated how the traditional single-case emphasis in historiography failed to take into account the international nature of historiography and the Catholic world. By highlighting the importance of the neo-Thomist centre at the Catholic University of Leuven, this thesis has been able to demonstrate how these Flemish and French-Canadian historians were part of a shared Catholic network, thereby establishing a shared historiographical connection between the two cases. Moreover, the connection between Flemish and French-Canadian historians in the neo-Thomist network illustrates how, via the comparative method, it is able to shed new light on the practice of historiography in the first half of the twentieth century, and show the interconnectedness of historians that transcends a purely European or North-American perspective.

The inclusion of both Flemish and French-Canadian nationalist historians in a shared neo-Thomist network is a second element to emphasise, as the relevance of the neo-Thomist philosophy on the nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders has been able to contribute to new insights in the two cases' historiography. What has been proven in this thesis is that the neo-Thomist philosophy has profoundly influenced the conceptualization and practice of historiography in both regions. One of the most crucial elements that the analysis of the neo-Thomist philosophy has brought forward is a reconsideration of the essentialist paradigm of nationalist historiography during this period. The neo-Thomist emphasis on the interdependence of essential and existential properties in

a substance, analysed and illustrated via the neo-Thomist conceptualization of chemistry, leads us to reconsider the traditional portrayal of nationalist historiography as intrinsically essentialist as the interconnectedness of essence and existence consequently ascribes a prominent role to the historicity of the historical actors and circumstances in the nationalist historiography of the two cases. In this sense, what the neo-Thomist philosophy illustrates is the inextricable connection between Catholicism and nationalism in both Quebec and Flanders during this period, and how an analysis of neo-Thomist concepts and philosophy has helped to shed new light, and reinterpret certain historiographical practices in both regions that can be considered as different from the traditional portrayal of historiography.

This reconsideration of nationalist historiography through an analysis of neo-Thomist philosophy has been illustrated very clearly in the conceptualization of scientific history in Quebec and Flanders. The analysis has led to two new insights in the practice of nationalist historiography in the two cases. First, the influence of neo-Thomist philosophy on the concept of science and scientific history led to a nuanced interpretation of what constituted scientific history according to nationalist historians in Quebec and Flanders. What has been crucial to emphasise is that the neo-Thomist concept of science in which there was an accordance between objectivity and subjectivity legitimated the nationalist historians' conceptualization of history as both subjective and objective, ascribing a prominent role to the process of history and consequently the historian in general in the practice of conducting scientific history. Moreover, the analysis of the neo-Thomist conceptualization of science, and its influence on the nationalist historiographies of Quebec and Flanders helps to address a dilemma in the traditional portrayal of nationalist historiography, illustrating that via the neo-Thomist framework the dilemma of nationalist historiography as both objective and subjective is perfectly intelligible.

Secondly, while nationalist historians in both Quebec and Flanders ascribed to the neo-Thomist concept of science and scientific history the practical realization of what constituted scientific history differed in the two cases, and, as such, can shed light on the peculiarities and differences between the two cases' contexts. In particular, two elements have been highlighted. The first is the benefit of using a paratextual analysis in the comparison of historiography in different contexts. What the paratextual analysis, and the differences between Quebec and Flanders, has shown is that there can be a theoretical convergence, but practical divergence between different proponents of a shared historiographical tradition. By using the paratextual analysis in this thesis, it has been possible to highlight how nationalist historians, due to their different contexts, represented the theoretical concept of scientific history in a different manner, illustrating how it is necessary in a historiographical analysis to consider the dynamic relation between practice and theory, and how a shared

historiographical tradition does not necessarily constitute a similar practical realization. The second element out of this divergence of theory and practice is the emphasis via the paratextual analysis that has been put on the differing academic and publishing context in Quebec and Flanders, thereby highlighting how these differences contributed to a different practical realization of scientific history in both cases. What has been illustrated in the comparison between the two cases is how a different academic context can lead to a different practical realization of scientific history. By highlighting how Flemish nationalist historians, because of their embeddedness in a larger academic context, were more inclined to present their work as scientifically, this thesis has been able to provide new insights into the complex interplay between nationalism, scientific history, and the academic context. Moreover, by comparing the influence and consequence of the different academic context on the realization of scientific history in Quebec and Flanders, it is able to bring new perspectives to the analysis of historiography, by arguing that what constitutes a historiography in theory does not suffice, and a historiographical analysis has to take into account the practical aspects of historiography, and the contexts that influence the practical (material) aspects of a particular historiography.

This emphasis on the importance and impact of the differing contexts in Quebec and Flanders on the conceptualization of neo-Thomist notions in the nationalist historiographies was further illustrated through the analysis of the concept of teleology. The analysis of the neo-Thomist concept of teleology has provided new insights to the dynamics of teleology and nationalism, and in particular two elements have been emphasised that lead to a reconsideration of the traditional portrayal of the connection between teleology, nationalism and historiography. First, it has been illustrated how in the neo-Thomist concept of teleology a prominent role was ascribed to the notion of human freedom. Contrary to the traditional portrayal of nationalist historiography which due to its focus on the natural and essentialist properties of the nation consisted of an inherently, *a priori*, predetermined individual, the neo-Thomist concept of teleology maintained an important emphasis on human freedom, and, as such, granted each individual an element of historicity and freedom of choice in a specific historical circumstance. This was further illustrated by the second element, the notion of ambiguity in the neo-Thomist concept of teleology. By granting an important role to human choice and freedom, the neo-Thomist concept of teleology was intrinsically ambiguous, and the notion of a predetermined development had to be nuanced in light of this element. Consequently, the element of ambiguity, in accordance with the neo-Thomist notion of the interdependence of essence and existence, ascribed a necessary role to the specific historical circumstances in which individuals have the freedom to choose, and thus allowed for the element of contingency in their teleological perspective.

It is this neo-Thomist emphasis on the notions of human freedom and ambiguity that helps to redefine the teleological premise of nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders, and helps to

nuance the traditional portrayal of the connection between teleology and nationalism. This has been highlighted through the use of two specific cases. In Flanders, this has been illustrated through the notion of coincidence. It has been shown how Flemish nationalist historians ascribed a prominent role to the notion of coincidence, thereby arguing that the notion illustrated the emphasis on the interdependence of essence and existence, and, consequently, how the notion of coincidence led to a re-interpretation of the concept of teleology in nationalist historiography. In particular, what the notion of coincidence has shown is that the interpretation of nationalist historiography as constituting an essentialist nation that transcends the specific historical circumstances – thereby defined as an ahistorical entity – has to be redefined, and a larger role has to be ascribed to the notion of contingency in the definition and analysis of nationalist historiography.

This element has been further illustrated with regards to the concept of Providence in French-Canadian nationalist historiography. It has been argued that the neo-Thomist influence on the French-Canadian nationalist historiography led to a reinterpretation of the concept of Providence. Contrary to the traditional definition in which Providence played an active role, and the course of history was, regardless of human choice, predetermined, the neo-Thomist influence on French-Canadian nationalist historians has led to a reconsideration. Particularly, the emphasis on human freedom and ambiguity influenced the concept of Providence amongst French-Canadian nationalist historians, leading to a concept in which Providence did not necessarily predetermine all history, thus allowing for the necessity of human choice and, by extension, contingency in the overall providential conceptualization. In this sense, in both cases, what the analysis of the neo-Thomist concept of teleology has shown is that the notions of contingency and human freedom – and consequently historicity – figured more prominently than has been acknowledged in the traditional portrayals of nationalist historiography.

Similar to the concept of science, the shared historiographical influence of neo-Thomism did result in different outcomes, particularly in the further political development of the nationalist historians throughout the first half of the twentieth century. It has been illustrated how Flemish nationalist historians, in their analysis of the teleological development of the nation, inscribed a sense of urgency to their own contemporary time, believing that they themselves had to play a (political) role in the further development of the nation towards its ultimate end. This was clearly different from the French-Canadian case, where the most prominent nationalist historian, Lionel Gorulx, refused to become actively involved in party politics, and put the urgency of the political development in the future, thereby ascribing a prominent role to the younger generations who did undertake active political roles during the interwar period. It has been highlighted how this difference in the connection between teleology, urgency and political involvement was influenced by the differing political

contexts. Particularly, it has been illustrated how the different political institutional contexts – with the Belgian political context characterised as unstable compared to the relative political stability in Canada – contributed to the different sense of urgency. Moreover, by emphasising the geopolitical differences between the two cases, it has been possible to highlight the complex interplay between historiography, teleology and politics that influenced the political actions of the Flemish nationalist historians, and has provided new insights into the analysis and explanation for the collaboration of a number of Flemish nationalist historians during the Second World War.

It is this emphasis on contextual differences to explain the divergence in the two cases' nationalist historiographies that is the first of the final two reflections that will be made with regards to this thesis. What this thesis has shown is that a historiographical analysis and comparison benefits from widening the scope of analysis, not limiting itself to the purely historiographical or historical-institutional factors to analyse and explain a particular historiography. What the analysis of the complex interplay between neo-Thomist philosophy and nationalist historiography has illustrated is that the concept of history, and historiography in general, is not isolated, but has to be considered as a public notion that was debated and conceptualized by different groups and philosophies that were not restricted to the historical-institutional context. By highlighting the influence of neo-Thomist concepts on nationalist historiography in Quebec and Flanders, this thesis has been able to transcend the traditional dilemmas that plagued the analysis of historiography and nationalism in the two cases, and has been able to present nationalist historiography as a complex interplay between different factors, thereby illustrating that the notion of history was not only conceptualized by historians themselves, but was also given form by other groups. In this sense, this thesis has provided new arguments on the nature of historiography and the analysis of historiography, arguing that the analysis benefits from both the widening of the scope, and the practice of comparison, because through comparison, it is possible to avoid the pitfalls that are inextricably connected to a single-case analysis of historiography.

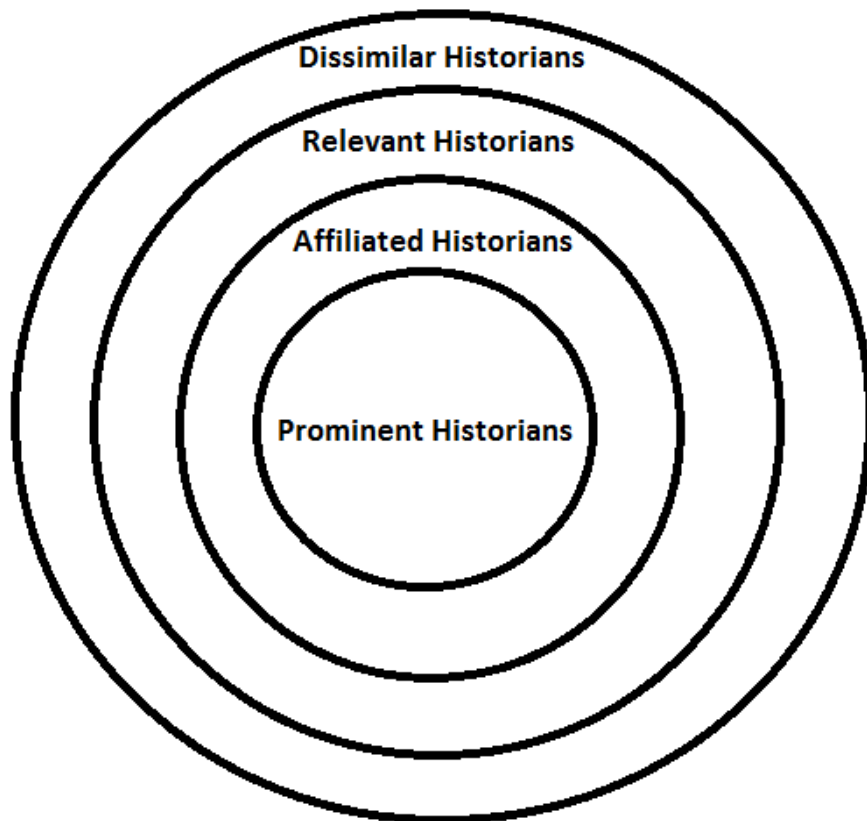
This does not entail, however, that the comparative method should be considered as a panacea, which leads to the second and final reflection. What the analysis of the neo-Thomist concepts, and their influence on the nationalist historiographies in Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century has shown is the risk in a comparative method of superimposing a too rigorous analysis of concepts and framework, thereby adjusting the specific historical cases to the superimposed framework. This thesis has avoided that risk by highlighting the malleability of the neo-Thomist concepts, and how the differing contexts helped to shape and reform the theoretical concepts that were influential in both cases due to their shared historiographical connection. Moreover, what the malleability of the concepts has illustrated is the complex interplay between theory and practice

that defines and influences any particular historiography, and highlighted how this approach to the use of theoretical concepts helps a comparative analysis, as it denotes both the similarities and differences of the compared cases. In this sense, the analysis of the neo-Thomist concepts in the nationalist historiographies in Quebec and Flanders can figure as a template for historiographical analysis, in which the malleability of theoretical concepts is recognized so as to avoid the risk of superimposing a framework or idea on a specific historiography, thereby adapting and thwarting a historiographical case to be able to fit the framework and analysis.

It is with this second and final reflection on the broader use of the historiographical comparison between Quebec and Flanders during the first half of the twentieth century that I draw this thesis to a close. From a teleological perspective, this means that the thesis has reached its ultimate end, and has thus become a part of the past. The only hope I can retain is that this thesis can ultimately contribute to the motto of the neo-Thomists I have analysed: *vetera novis augere*.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Image of the concentric historiographical analysis.



ACADEMIC YEARS.	FACULTY OF THEOLOGY.		FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY.
	Critical Exercises on the Sources.	Historical Conferences.	Practical Studies on the Middle Ages.
	First series Prof. Jungmann.		
1889-1890.....	11		
1890-1891.....	8		
1891-1892.....	7		
1892-1893.....	6		
1893-1894.....	7		
	Second series Prof. Cauchie.		
1894-1895.....	7		
1895-1896.....	6		15
1896-1897.....	9	18	7
1897-1898.....	5	19	11
1898-1899.....	11	22	9
1899-1900.....	8	23	10
1900-1901.....	12	28	8
1901-1902.....	13	25	12
1902-1903.....	8	30	17
1903-1904.....	15	41	22
1904-1905.....	20	41	27
1905-1906.....	26	36	23

Appendix 2, History Graduates at the University of Leuven from 1889-1906

Source: Alfred Cauchie, 'The Teaching of History at Louvain', *The Catholic University Bulletin* 13 (1907), pp. 544.

FACULTÉ DE DROIT.

LICENCIÉS EN SCIENCES POLITIQUES ET SOCIALES.

Verbaet, Maurice, de Moerbeke; 22 mars.

Hannigan, Edmond, de Cork (Irlande); id.

Muller, Albert, de Gand; 4 juin.

Robert, Arthur, de Beauport (Canada); 9 juillet.

Mousseaux, Louis, de Valleyfield (Canada); 16 juillet.

De Muelenaere, Robert, d'Ardoye; 5 octobre.

Appendix 3, Students at the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Leuven in 1907

Source: *Annuaire De L'universite Catholique De Louvain: 71ere Annee*, (Leuven: Vanlinthout, 1908), pp. 159.

Appendix 4 Course Programme for the licentiate and doctorate in Historical and Moral Sciences in 1908 at the University of Leuven. Source: *Annuaire De L'universite Catholique De Louvain: 71ere Annee*, pp. 108-109.

COURS FACULTATIFS.

F. L. G. Collard, Prof. ord. *Exercices de la Conférence d'histoire littéraire grecque et latine*, jeudi de 20 h. à 22 h., pendant le premier semestre.

P. Collinet, Prof. ord. *Grammaire sanscrite. — Rig-Véda : Hymnes choisis*, aux jours et heures à déterminer.

A. Cauchie, Prof. ord. *Introduction à l'Histoire ecclésiastique*, lundi à 8 h. — *L'Histoire ecclésiastique*, mercredi à 8 h., jeudi à midi. — *Exercices critiques du Séminaire historique*, lundi à 20 h. et jeudi à 17 heures.

W. Bang, Prof. ord. *Les Inscriptions vieux-persanes des Achéménides*, aux jours et heures à déterminer. — *Les prédécesseurs de Shakespeare*, aux jours et heures à déterminer.

E. Remy, Prof. ord. *Exercices de la Societas philologa*, mercredi de 20 h. à 22 h.

L. Scharpé, Prof. ord. *Le Gotique. — L'Epopée populaire en Allemagne*, aux jours et heures à déterminer.

A. Hebbelynck, Prof. ord. de la Faculté de Théologie et Recteur Magnifique (suppléant : T. LEFORT, chargé de cours). *Les Hiéroglyphes*. Textes choisis, aux jours et heures à déterminer.

J. Forget, Prof. ord. de la Faculté de Théologie. Les cours d'*Arabe et de Syriaque*, indiqués ci-dessus.

A. Van Hoonacker, Prof. ord. de la Faculté de Théologie. Le cours d'*Hébreu*, indiqué ci-dessus.

P. Ladeuze, Prof. ord. de la Faculté de Théologie. Le cours de *langue Copte*, aux jours et heures à déterminer. *La Patrologie*, cours indiqué ci-dessus.

R. Maere, Prof. ord. de la Faculté de Théologie. *L'Archéologie chrétienne et la Paléographie*, cours indiqués ci-dessus.

A. Carnoy, Prof. extraord. *Le zend et le pehlvi*, aux jours et heures à déterminer. — *Notions diverses sur l'antiquité grecque en vue de l'explication des auteurs*, aux jours et heures à déterminer.

A. Bayoit, chargé de cours. *Les langues espagnole et italienne*, lundi et vendredi à 16 h., pendant le premier semestre.

Cours spéciaux de Philologie orientale et de Linguistique.

Voir le programme spécial.

C. C. A. Moeller, Prof. ord. *L'Histoire politique de l'antiquité* (2^e partie), cours indiqué ci-dessus.

V. L. J. L. Brants, Prof. ord. *L'Histoire politique moderne*, cours indiqué ci-dessus.

P. De Wulf, Prof. ord. *La Logique*, cours indiqué ci-dessus.

D. Nys, Prof. ord. *La Psychologie*, cours indiqué ci-dessus.

J. Sencie, Prof. ord. *L'Histoire politique de l'antiquité* (1^e partie), cours indiqué ci-dessus.

Des *exercices* sur l'histoire seront donnés une heure par semaine pendant un semestre.

Deuxième épreuve.

C. C. A. Moeller, Prof. ord. *L'Histoire politique du moyen âge et Notions sur l'histoire contemporaine*, cours indiqués ci-dessus.

V. L. J. L. Brants, Prof. ord. *L'Histoire politique interne de la Belgique*, cours indiqué ci-dessus.

A. Van Hoonacker, Prof. ord. de la Faculté de Théologie. *La Philosophie morale*, cours indiqué ci-dessus.

S. Deploige, Prof. ord. de la Faculté de Droit. *Le droit naturel*, cours indiqué ci-dessus.

Des *exercices* sur l'histoire seront donnés une heure par semaine pendant un semestre.

Examen de Licencié en Sciences morales et historiques (1).

C. C. A. Moeller, Prof. ord. *L'Encyclopédie de l'histoire, la Critique historique et Application à une période de l'histoire*, cours indiqués ci-dessus.

L. Bossu, Prof. ord. *L'Histoire de la philosophie moderne*, cours indiqué ci-dessus.

V. L. J. L. Brants, Prof. ord. *Les Institutions des temps modernes*, cours indiqué ci-dessus.

A. Cauchie, Prof. ord. *Les Institutions du moyen âge*, cours indiqué ci-dessus.

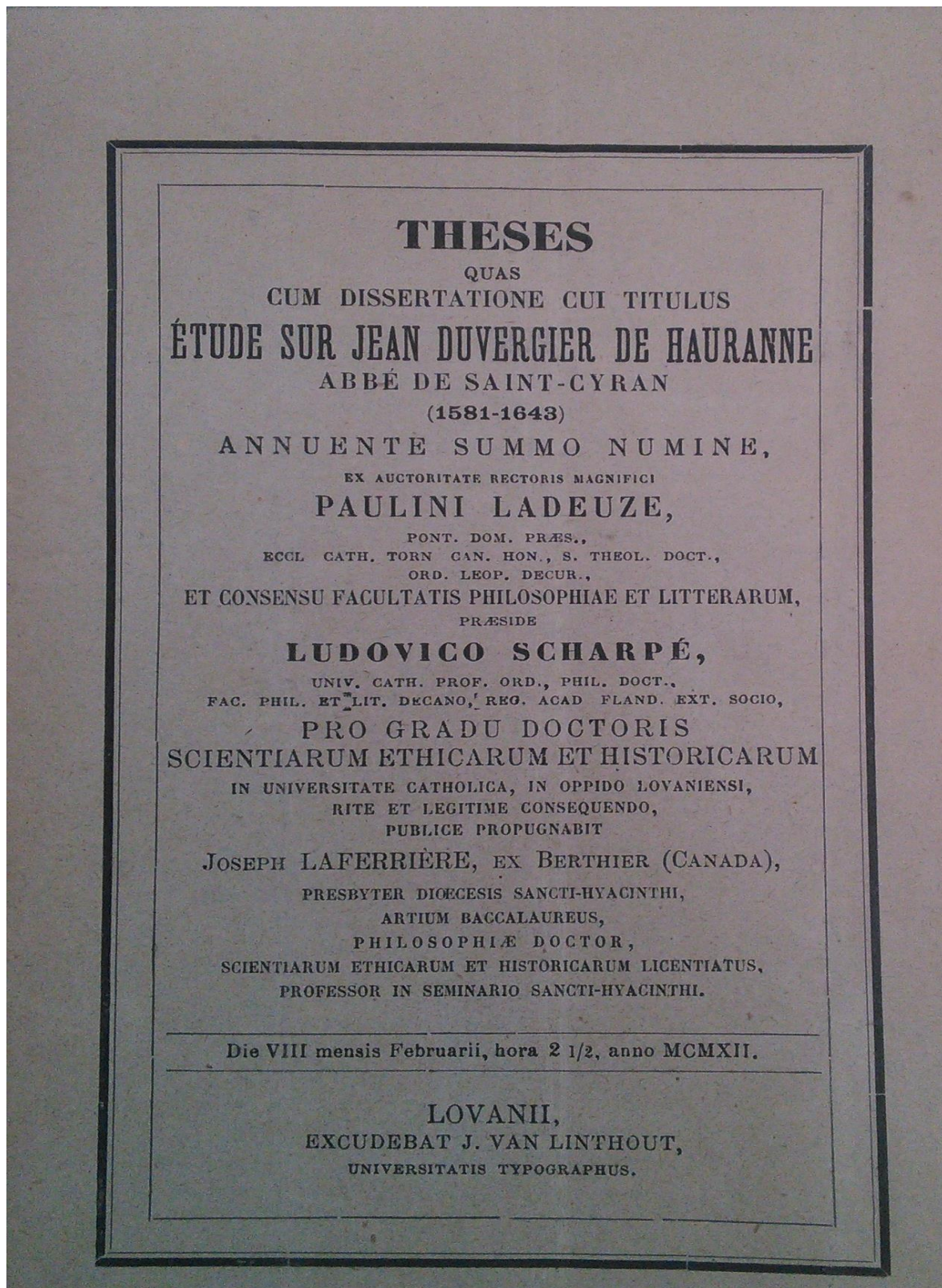
R. Maere, Prof. ord. de la Faculté de Théologie. *La Paléographie et Diplomatique du moyen âge. — L'Archéologie chrétienne*, cours indiqués ci-dessus.

Une matière à choisir entre les cours suivants : *L'Histoire ecclésiastique, le Droit public et l'Économie politique*. (Voir les cours des Facultés de Théologie et de Droit.)

(1) L'épreuve du *Doctorat en sciences morales et historiques*, comporte : 1^o une dissertation inaugurale sur un sujet d'histoire, elle doit être imprimée ; 2^o la défense publique de xiv thèses annexées à la dissertation.

Appendix 5: Fifteen theorems defended by Laferrière

Source: Joseph Laferrière, *Étude Sur Jean Duvergier De Hauranne, Abbé De Saint-Cyran (1581-1643)* (Leuven: Wouters-Ickx, 1912).



THESES.

1.

En histoire, on ne peut jamais arriver à une certitude d'évidence interne.

II.

M. Seignobos (1) rejette à tort l'existence du miracle en histoire, sous prétexte que « la méthode historique indirecte ne vaut jamais les méthodes directes des sciences d'observation » et que « la notion même de miracle est métaphysique ».

III.

Pour discerner les actes authentiques des actes faux, il importe d'étudier avant tout la question de l'expéditeur ; de même, pour expliquer les actes faux, il n'importe pas moins de concentrer les études autour de la question du destinataire. C'est ce que montrent la raison et l'expérience.

IV.

A l'époque mérovingienne, l'Église et l'État francs reconnaissent la juridiction spirituelle de l'évêque de Rome comme chef suprême de l'Église catholique.

V.

Pépin et Charlemagne n'ont pas créé le pouvoir temporel des papes ; mais ils l'ont agrandi et consolidé.

VI.

C'est par l'influence de l'Église que les serfs du moyen-âge furent mis en possession du droit de contracter mariage et de fonder une famille.

(1) Cf. LANGLOIS ET SEIGNOBOS, *Introduction aux études historiques*, 4^e édition, p. 178.

VII.

Malgré la violence exercée par le peuple romain durant le conclave de 1378, le Collège des cardinaux semble avoir accepté, pendant les premiers mois du pontificat d'Urbain VI, l'élection de ce pape comme un fait accompli.

VIII.

La *Pragmatique sanction de saint Louis* est un faux, composé probablement pour appuyer les prétentions gallicanes et la *Pragmatique sanction de Bourges* ; elle a été mise en circulation entre les années 1438 et 1450.

IX.

Bien qu'Érasme ait attaqué trop vivement le clergé et les tendances théologiques de son époque, ce serait méconnaître son mérite et mal comprendre ses réformes projetées, que de prétendre que le savant humaniste ait conçu, fût-ce même au commencement de sa carrière, une réforme schismatique.

X.

Quelles que soient les sources dont s'est servi saint Ignace de Loyola pour composer ses *Exercices spirituels*, on aurait tort de dénier à son œuvre une réelle et puissante originalité.

XI.

Les *Lettres chrétiennes et spirituelles de Messire Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, abbé de Saint-Cyran*, éditées par Robert Arnauld d'Andilly, ne représentent pas exactement la doctrine de ce réformateur.

XII.

Le livre *De la fréquente communion*, publié par Antoine Arnauld, en 1643, n'exprimait pas une doctrine nouvelle, mais reproduisait en réalité et défendait les doctrines déjà anciennes de l'abbé de Saint-Cyran, à l'inspiration et à l'influence duquel ce livre est dû.

XIII.

Les gouverneurs français du Canada, de 1680 à 1714, ont fait un acte humanitaire en s'alliant aux Indiens amis pour combattre les Iroquois.

XIV.

C'est grâce à la loyauté des Canadiens-Français que l'Angleterre a pu conserver sa belle colonie du Canada.

Vidit Facultas Philosophiæ et Litterarum.

L. SCHARPÉ, Fac. p. t. Decanus.

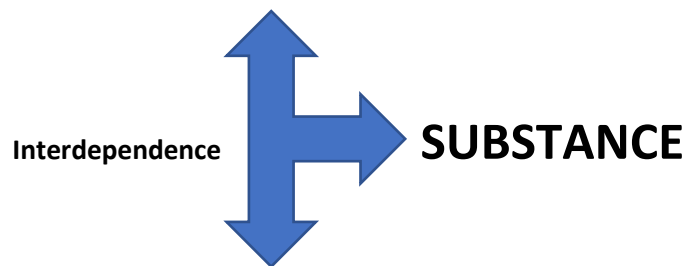
F. MAYENCE, Fac. p. t. a secretis.

Vidit Rector Universitatis.

P. LADEUZE.

Nys' conceptualization of Energetics

ESSENCE (Necessary Accidents = Properties)



EXISTENCE (Contingent Accidents)

French-Canadian and Flemish nationalists' concept of the Nation

ESSENCE (Language/Race/Religion)



EXISTENCE (Historical Circumstances)

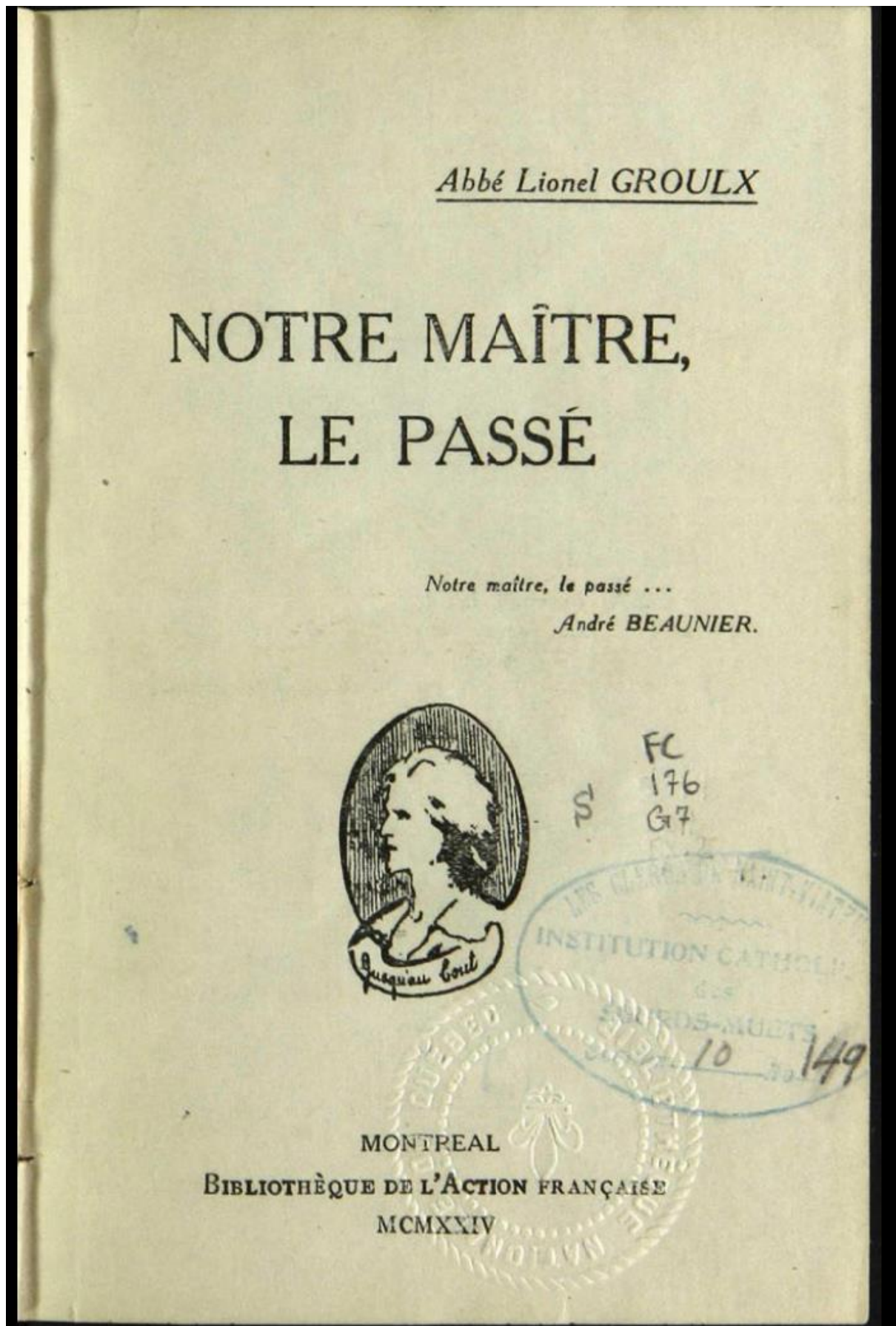
Appendix 7: Traditional distinction and portrayal of History and Philosophy of History by historians as the result of the Rankean maxim.

Historical Science	Philosophy of History
Particular	General
Historical/Archival science	Positive science
Objective	Subjective
Past	Present/Future

Philosophy of History > Historical Science = Political (nationalist) propaganda

Historical Science > Philosophy of History = Objective history

Philosophy of History = Historical Science = Bouchard



Geschiedenis van Vlaanderen

ONDER LEIDING VAN
DR. R. VAN ROOSBROECK

OUDSTE GESCHIEDENIS

DOOR

PROF. DR. H. VAN DE WEERD
EN DR. ROB. DE MAEYER

MIDDELEEUWEN

DOOR

PROF. DR. L. VAN DER ESSEN
PROF. DR. F. L. GANSHOF
EN DR. R. VAN ROOSBROECK

BOERGONDISCH TIJDVAK

DOOR

DR. FR. QUICKE

NIEUWE EN NIEUWSTE
GESCHIEDENIS

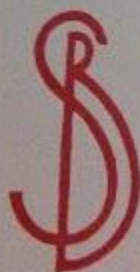
DOOR

PROF. DR. H. VAN WERVEKE
EN DR. R. VAN ROOSBROECK

ILLUSTRATIE

ONDER LEIDING VAN

DR. L. LEBEER



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Missionnaire-Colonisateur.

LA COLONISATION DU CANADA

SOUS LA

DOMINATION FRANÇAISE

PRÉCIS HISTORIQUE

*Dans l'Inde on avait pu admirer quelques grands
hommes, ici ce fut tout un peuple qui fut
grand.*

HENRI MARTIN.

*Une page d'histoire du Canada est une leçon
d'espérance et d'énergie chrétienne.
La Race Française en Amérique.*

DESROSIERES et FOURNET.



BELLIONNE
QUÉBEC SAINT-SULPICE
1916

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